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Labor History in the United States



A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study

Front cover:

- Anton Refregier, “The Waterfront 1934,” (depiction of San Francisco Dock Strike of 1934 in mural *History of San Francisco,*1941-48), Rincon Annex Post Office, San Francisco, CA, 2012 (photograph LOC P&P CMH)
- Striking pecan shellers picketing on sidewalk in front of the Southern Pecan Shelling Company, San Antonio, TX, 1938 (University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections, San Antonio Light Photograph Collection)

LABOR HISTORY IN THE UNITED STATES

A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study

Prepared by:

National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers Consultant
Rachel Donaldson, Ph.D.
Department of History
College of Charleston

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LOC P&P, HABS	Historic American Buildings Survey
LOC P&P, HAER	Historic American Engineering Record
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NYPL	New York Public Library
WPRL	Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University

*Other sources fully noted in caption.

INTRODUCTION:
MARKING LABOR HISTORY ON THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE[1]



Bas relief above doorway, Community Building, Greenbelt, MD, 1989 *(Jack E. Boucher, LOC P&P, HABS MD-1979)*

The history of labor in the United States is a national story; it encompasses all of the social, political, economic, ethnic, and racial groups that together constitute the proverbial American people. Recognizing places significant to labor history helps connect the stories of workers to national historical events, movements and themes. Visitors to these places have the opportunity to consider events often ignored by mainstream historical sources. Over the past fifty years, historians have discovered a popular interest in rediscovering labor's past and in reinterpreting the contribution of working people to local and national developments. To this end, workers have collaborated with historians in this process of democratizing and publicizing the past.[2]

The history of labor is concomitant with almost every property identified as nationally significant. The greatest national places can be seen not only as construction and engineering marvels, but also as places where labor history was made. For example, the Hoover Dam (Hoover Dam, NHL, 1985), completed in 1935, is associated with the nearby Boulder City Historic District. This district is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a company

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[1] James Green, former Professor of History and Labor Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and Rachel Donaldson, Associate Professor of History at the College of Charleston, prepared this introductory essay. Dr. Green specialized in the study of social movements, particularly those involving workers and unions, and in the presentation of people's history to the public. His books include *Taking History to Heart: The Power of the Past in Building Social Movements* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000) and *Commonwealth of Toil: Chapters in the History of Massachusetts Workers and Their Unions* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), co-authored with Tom Juravich and William F. Hartford. Dr. Donaldson is a historian of twentieth-century American history and public history. Her books include, *'I Hear America Singing': Folk Music and National Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014) and *Roots of the Revival: American and British Folk Music in the 1950s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), co-authored with Ronald D. Cohen.

[2] For further exploration of how workers' stories and places of memory contribute to a deeper public awareness of history and of movements for social change, see James Green, *Taking History to Heart.*

town that restricted union organizers and African Americans.[3] In 1931, construction workers quit in protest against dangerous working conditions and a brutal pace, only to be replaced by unemployed laborers from Las Vegas. Not until passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933 did union organizers establish locals to shape conditions and labor terms for the project's completion.

Railroad, lumbering, mining, manufacturing, and many agricultural properties represent locations largely populated by the working class. The textile and clothing industries—two of the largest nineteenth-century industries—along with two other enormous sectors, domestic servants and agricultural laborers, also included women and children at work with men. Another critical aspect of labor history prior to 1865 is that of enslaved labor. The system of chattel slavery was inextricably tied to labor, but to adequately address the complexity of enslaved labor and the lived experiences of enslaved people across the continental United States requires a theme study dedicated to this subject. For this reason, this study is restricted to examples of work ostensibly considered "free labor," with some exceptions including the debt peonage of sharecropping and the convict lease system in southern extractive industries.

In the past six decades some of the most exciting research by labor historians concerns women and people of color, groups once ignored by scholars of labor and industry. Patterns of migration and immigration have greatly altered the social makeup of the working-class and augmented the racial and ethnic diversity of this population. A greater understanding of the diversity and complexity of the work force created by the industrial revolution is perhaps the leading achievement of what is referred to as "the new labor history."

[3] The public suggested many of the locations discussed in this introductory essay. The explanations accompanying these suggestions have been used extensively as illustrations.



A young civil rights demonstrator at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963 *(unknown photographer, NARA, Records of the U.S. Information Agency* [306-SSM-4B-61-32]*)*

The New Labor History

The traditional approach to labor history adopted a grand narrative form in which heroic workers and their unions marched, bent but not bowed, toward a better future, culminating in the New Deal and federal labor law reforms. However, this approach often neglected workers outside of both the small core of tradesmen unionized before 1935 and the expanded core of industrial, commercial, and municipal workers unionized since World War II. The new labor history, sensitive to the racial, ethnic, and gender politics of the 1960s and 1970s, tells a much wider range of stories concerning women and workers of color who never belonged to unions or who were neglected or discriminated against within unions. New themes arise in these studies that focus, not on the trade union as an institution, but on familial, communal, and cultural resources working people used to survive. Indeed, the new labor history often abandons the traditional narrative form; instead of telling stories about working people, its practitioners have adopted social science methods of analysis. Some historians bemoan the lack of synthesis in the new social history and attempt a new narrative in which the old progressive story is integrated with the stories of women and minorities.[4]

At the same time, working people themselves continue to tell stories about their past and about places of historic importance. In particular, union officials have created an institutional memory

[4] For an example of a historical synthesis see Nelson Lichtenstein, et al., *Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture and Society*, vol. II. (New York: Worth Publishers, 2000).

of stories highlighting accomplishments of the founders. In some communities, unions have tales of suffering about those who paid the ultimate price for workers' rights.

In addition to continuously evolving, the field of study of labor and working-class history is, in and of itself, relatively new. In the first half of the twentieth century, labor history enjoyed little academic status. A sub-field of economics, it made virtually no impact on the historical profession until the 1960s, when a new generation of researchers began to place labor history in the wider context of social history.[5] One of the first works that shaped the rise of this new methodology was *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) by the British historian E. P. Thompson. Thompson's work was important for exploring labor history from the perspectives of workers themselves, delving into their families, communities, and the overall working-class culture they created. Labor historians inspired by Thompson's approach turned the field into one of the most exciting areas in the American historical profession and made it possible to understand working people's lives within the larger vistas opened up by the new social history. For example, Herbert Gutman extended the timeline of labor history before the industrial revolution to include the lives and cultures of "pre-industrial" artisans and laborers and widened the scope of labor history to embrace African American struggles that generations of White historians had generally ignored.[6]

Younger historians, aroused by the social movements of the 1960s, eagerly followed the lead of these pioneering social historians, and decades later scholars still produce illuminating studies of a range of working-class experiences. Drawing on this body of scholarship, historians have written essays for this study that survey the research on major occupational groupings in manufacturing, extractive industries, transportation, agriculture, and service and white-collar work.

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[5] David Brody, *Steelworkers in America: The Nonunion Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); Herbert Gutman, "The Workers Search for Power," in *The Gilded Age: A Reappraisal*, ed. H. Wayne Morgan (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963); David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872* (New York: Knopf, 1967).

[6] Although mainstream White scholars tended to ignore African American history, Black scholars had been advancing scholarship that focused on African American historical experiences since the early twentieth century. A pioneer in advocating the study of Black history prior to the rise of African American studies in the late 1960s was Carter G. Woodson, who founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915. Along with Woodson, different scholars generated works that explored history from the perspective of African Americans who had been ignored in the historical record. A notable example of this is W. E. B. DuBois's seminal historical study of African Americans during the period of Reconstruction, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880* (1935), which challenged the traditional historiography by including Black voices and illustrating Black agency.



Employees of Coca-Cola plant on strike, Sikeston, MO, 1940 *(John Vachon, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

Labor History Themes

The study is organized into chapters that each focus on one of the leading industries in the United States. While each chapter is thematically distinct, there are many overlaps, particularly when dealing with labor organizers who worked among various industries. Furthermore, rather than following one overarching chronological schema for the study as a whole, each chapter follows its own chronology that corresponds to the unique historical development of each field. Organizing the study by occupational groups allows for an assessment of research by labor historians who have studied a wide variety of working people: union and non-union, native and foreign-born, male and female, White and Black, northern and southern, and those of various religious affiliations. Within this occupational framework, which captures the diversity of working-class history, several common themes emerged.

First, **working and moving** were linked. The experience of working for wages meant moving from job to job and to different locations. Second, life was short for those in working-class industrial areas, such that working for a **living and dying** young were also linked. Third, **playing and praying** influenced cultural and social life among working people. Recreational and religious activity did not concern labor historians until recently, when they discovered that workers often used chapels, saloons, clubs, and ballparks as places to express values and even oppositional ideas. Fourth, historians have taken a new interest in working-class intellectual life, recalling the critical importance of **teaching and learning** to workers and their organizations. Fifth, **organizing and struggling**, the traditional concerns of labor history, are considered together. Union organizing, collective bargaining, striking, boycotting, and political activity have recently been studied within a wider social and cultural context. Workers are seen not only as

economic beings, but also as family and community members, and as citizens and agents of democratic change. The struggle for workers' rights extended far beyond the right to work eight hours, the right to join a free trade union, and the right to collective bargaining. It also involved a crusade to extend the Bill of Rights to working people. In sum, these experiences suggest that properties of labor history include, and go beyond, factories, mills, union halls, and strike scenes.

These themes have been culled from the chapters specific to this study and they closely tie to the eight themes of the revised framework of national significance adopted by the National Park Service in 1994. The latter themes, which serve as a guide in assessing the national significance of particular properties, include the following interrelated categories: *Peopling Places*, *Creating Social Institutions and Movements, Expressing Cultural Values, Shaping the Political Landscape, Developing the American Economy, Expanding Science and Technology, Transforming the Environment*, and the *Changing Role of the United States in the World Community*. Almost all of labor history relates directly to the theme of *Developing the American Economy*, for this category specifically addresses the contributions that working people made to the American economy through productive labor. The technological innovations in each industry, and workers' attitudes towards technological change, clearly tie this history to *Expanding Science and Technology* as well. Furthermore, almost all industries in the extractive, manufacturing, and agricultural sectors clearly contributed to *Transforming the Environment* due to the indelible marks they left on the ecosystems of the regions in which they took root. Finally, the very fact that every chapter addresses the labor *movement*, which was often tied to shaping mainstream politics such as New Deal liberalism or radical politics like that of the American Communist Party, situates this history squarely within the categories of *Creating Social Institutions and Movements* and *Shaping the Political Landscape.*

While certain themes have obvious ties to labor history, it is important to show how this history as a whole relates to *all* the themes of national significance in order to illustrate the importance of labor for the history of the United States. Like this study, the categories of the revised framework are designed to illustrate the interconnections between race, ethnicity, class, and gender across a wide chronological span. Connecting the themes of labor history to the themes of this framework also sheds significant light on the social and cultural histories of workers and the communities that developed in and around places of production. Doing so generates greater social inclusivity in the designation and interpretation of labor and working-class historical properties in the United States.



Evicted farm family walking along road in Oklahoma, 1938 *(Dorothea Lange, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

Working and Moving
Peopling Places
Creating Social Institutions/Movements
Expressing Cultural Values

Working for a living forced many laborers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to keep moving. Historian David Montgomery writes of "common laborers" who, "whether by choice or necessity…moved incessantly from one job to another."[7] Highways and train lines served as conduits, enabling migrating workers to travel north and south, east and west. Certain places, such as Milam Park in San Antonio, Texas, became hiring hubs, places where labor recruiters armed with train tickets boarded individual workers and even whole families on northbound trains to work in fields, in mines, and on railroads. In many cases, little remains to represent the transience of this work force. Laborers moved quietly, even stealthily, day and night. They passed through fields, camps, and factory towns, often leaving few traces. Camps that housed migrant workers were temporary in nature. When laborers died, their graves frequently were unmarked. For example, in Mt. Cavalry Cemetery in McAlester, Oklahoma, a mass grave holds the remains of thirty-two Mexican immigrant miners who died in a gas explosion at the Bollen mine on December 17, 1929.

[7] David Montgomery, The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State and American Labor Activism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 87.

In addition to their marked mobility, many workers in the West were Latino and Asian immigrants and migrants. According to Zaragosa Vargas, a scholar of Latino and labor history, the tendency to neglect western workers of color has "fostered unreal images" of passivity among minority workers who have "been denied a just measure of recognition" for their labor history legacy. The Golden Spike National Historic Site (1965) in Promontory, Utah at one time recognized the completion of the transcontinental railroad, but not the contribution of thousands of Chinese laborers who "constructed the most difficult part of the Central Pacific Railroad through the Sierra Nevada Mountains."[8]

To recognize the complexities of the history of immigration and migration, and to illustrate how it is inextricably intertwined with labor history, we need to identify more sites that tell this story. Preservationist Ned Kaufman argues that historically significant places in the national narrative of labor history include ports of entry for immigrants, migrants, and enslaved persons who came forcibly or by choice for labor purposes. Other examples include places associated with well-known travel routes that immigrants and migrants followed to establish or settle in new communities—oftentimes leading to the potential for greater economic opportunity.[9] Places that became destinations for migratory workers include agricultural fields and manufacturing sites—both seasonal, like Kake Cannery (Kake Cannery, NHL, 1997), a salmon processing center in Alaska that employed largely Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Mexican, and African American contract workers; and year-round manufacturing centers like the Ford River Rouge Plant in Detroit, Michigan (Ford River Rouge Plant, NHL, 1978).

As immigrants and migrants moved to industrial centers in increasing numbers, they established communities near their places of employment; sometimes companies created these communities for workers and their families and other times workers established them on their own. The distance of some industries from established communities led companies to erect housing for workers, as was the case in mill towns like Harrisville, New Hampshire (Harrisville Historic District, NHL, 1977). Unlike the many properties of labor history that represent working conditions, drawing attention to spaces that illustrate working-class living conditions can be challenging. Some living conditions are represented in museum exhibits and restorations (like the Irish Shrine and Railroad Workers Museum in Baltimore, Maryland) but domestic properties with strong physical integrity are not always easy to locate. Certain working-class districts have been designated as National Historic Landmarks, which serve to incorporate domestic housing, community centers, and other aspects of working-class life into explorations of labor history. Examples include Ybor City in Tampa, Florida (Ybor City Historic District, NHL, 1974), where Cuban and Spanish-American cigar workers created a thriving union and radical culture, and Barrio de Analco in Sante Fe, New Mexico (Barrio de Analco Historic District, NHL, 1968). With its traditional adobe structures, Barrio de Analco includes perhaps the oldest plebeian dwellings in North America. Communities that were the sites of major—and violent—labor strikes, like Matewan, West Virginia, have also received designation as National Historic Landmarks (Matewan Historic District, NHL, 1997). The Lower East Side Tenement Museum in

[8] Quote from transcript of Labor History Theme Study Conference, Lowell National Park, June 26, 1992. Thanks to Marty Blatt, supervisory historian at Lowell, for a copy of this transcript. In the years following this conference the Golden Spike National Historic Site has made, and continues to make, efforts to increase the recognition of all the groups who built the railroad.

[9] Ned Kaufman, Place, Race, and Story: Essays on the Past and Future of Historic Preservation (Oxford: Routledge, 2009), 106-112.

New York City (Tenement Building at 97 Orchard Street, NHL, 1994) represents the living conditions of working class domestic life, particularly from the perspective of recent immigrants, in Manhattan's Lower East Side during the late-nineteenth century. A number of suggestions for consideration in this study feature company housing for coal, steel, and textile workers.



Interior view of the Tenement Museum, located on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, 97 Orchard Street, New York, NY, 2011 *(LOC P&P, CMH)*



Graveyard and steel mill, Bethlehem, PA, 1935 *(Walker Evans, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

Living and Dying
Creating Social Institutions/Movements
Expressing Cultural Values
Shaping the Political Landscape

Historically, working as a laborer often meant dying prematurely. The horrific extent of workplace fatalities was often hidden from public view, except when a lethal "accident" or "disaster" hit the front page of newspapers. Workers in extractive industries were particularly susceptible to injuries and death in the workplace, and the extractive essay in this study explains why these industries operated at such a brutal pace. Underground miners died by the thousands each year in gas explosions and rock falls. The death rate among these workers from respiratory illnesses like silicosis, although difficult to measure, was perhaps even higher.[10]

Sometimes, large-scale tragedies precipitated political reforms to improve the health and safety conditions for workers in various industries. In Avondale, Pennsylvania, a mine disaster led to the first state safety legislation. In Monongah, West Virginia, 361 miners died in a 1907 explosion that led to national safety reform. The horrific sanitary conditions and resulting sickness for migrant workers at the Durst Hop Ranch in California led to an outbreak of violence in 1913; the incident sparked an investigation into the living conditions of agricultural workers

[10] Alan Derickson, Workers' Health, Workers' Democracy: The Western Miners' Struggle, 1891-1925 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988) 38, 39-56.

by the Commission on Immigration and Housing in California, which precipitated an effort to institute health and sanitation regulations in the labor camps of migrant workers.[11] In the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory building (Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Building, NHL, 1991), near Washington Square in New York City, 146 young women perished in a fire on a spring afternoon in 1911 from suffocation, burns, or leaping from the building. The tragedy spurred the National Women's Trade Union League to demand investigations into the fire and its causes. This effort led the state of New York to adopt a series of model legislative reforms for workplace safety conditions as well.

For most laborers, the experience of working could not be separated from the fear of death or injury, so they created institutions to bury the dead or to care for the injured survivors. Union miners, for example, built clinics and hospitals in the minefields. At least one of the twenty-five union hospitals erected by the Western Federation of Miners between 1897 and 1918 might survive to mark this tradition of concern about the fearsome realities of underground work.[12]

The organizations and societies that workers created to aid each other in times of tragedy had social and cultural benefits as well. Perhaps the most important theme in the new social history of workers has to do with cultural life. The old institutional school of labor history treated workers as job-conscious "economic men" (women, children, and non-union laboring men were often overlooked). The new labor history is sensitive to workers' desire to have personal time—"eight hours for what we will"—to be parents; play ball; drink coffee or beer; attend festivals, weddings, and wakes; march in parades; read in libraries; go to musicals and later to the movies; listen to speeches; and attend union meetings.[13] The two most powerful labor movements of the nineteenth century focused on workers' *time* rather than their wages, for instance. The crusades for the ten-hour day and the eight-hour day showed that wage earners wanted to work to live—not live to work.

The new labor historians have examined workers' social worlds, portraying wage earners and their families as cultural beings, not as human machinery. In his most noted essay, Herbert Gutman writes, "Men and women who sell their labor to an employer bring more to a new or changing work situation than their physical presence." The interaction between their cultures and the forces of the workplace created a constant cycle of conflict and adaptation.[14] For these workers, particularly in immigrant communities, creating ethnic halls became a way to preserve their cultural traditions while adapting to their new circumstances in the United States. For instance, the Socialist Labor Party Hall in Barre, Vermont (Socialist Labor Party Hall, NHL, 2000) was a multi-ethnic community center for socialists, anarchists, and unionists. While it was heavily dominated by Italians, the Hall was open to anyone with an interest in radical politics

[11] Cary McWilliams, Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1939), 154-64; Cletus E. Daniel, Bitter Harvest: A History Of California Farmworkers, 1870-1941 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 88-91; Greg Hall, Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Laborers in the American West, 1905-1930 (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2001), 48-54, 85-86; Dick Meister and Anne Loftis, A Long Time Coming: The Struggle to Unionize America's Farm Workers (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 11-17.

[12] Alan Derickson, Workers' Health, Workers' Democracy, 101.

[13] For an excellent study of these concerns, see Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers & Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[14] Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Knopf, 1976), 10-11, 18.

and labor organization, and thus brought together various members of the largely immigrant workforce. The property even featured a cooperative grocery store to provide ethnic food for community members.[15] While places like this reflected the cultural specificities of the ethnic communities they represented, together they illustrate common patterns of how immigrants adapted to American life while at the same time infusing their traditions into the larger society in which they lived. The cultural tension created by the process of "pre-industrial" people adjusting to the demands of industrial work underlies the social history of the nation's working majority such that, for Gutman, "the history of the American working-class was the history of the United States."[16]



(L) ***Meeting of the Young American-Serbs Club, Butte, MT, 1942*** *(Russell Lee, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI) (R)* ***Italian-Americans watching a flag raising ceremony in honor of the feast of San Rocco, New York, NY*** *(Marjory Collins, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

[15] Karen Lane and Robin Bachin, "Socialist Labor Party Hall," National Historic Landmark Nomination Form, National Park Service, Washington, DC (May 16, 2000), 9-13; Barre Historical Society, "A Brief Introduction to History of the Socialist Labor Party Hall," http://oldlaborhall.org/history/history-of-the-socialist-labor-party-hall-introduction/ accessed August 4, 2016.

[16] Ira Berlin, "Herbert Gutman and the American Working Class," introduction to Herbert G. Gutman, *Power & Culture: Essays on the American Working Class*, ed. Ira Berlin (New York: Pantheon, 1987), 39.



(L) ***Sts. Peter & Paul Ukrainian Catholic Church, Mount Carmel, PA, 1938 (destroyed by fire in 1994)*** *(Sheldon Dick, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)****;*** *(R)* ***Corner of a room in Francis Ploppert's house, Gilberton, PA, 1938*** *(Sheldon Dick, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

Praying and Playing
Creating Social Institutions/Movements
Expressing Cultural Values

Of all the cultural places that ethnic working-class communities utilized, religious institutions rank among the highest. However, churches remain one of the most difficult categories of properties to nominate as NHLs (for further information, please consult the Criteria Exceptions section of the Guidelines segment of the study). One of the few churches suggested in this study is St. Joseph's Catholic Church, located in a small Oklahoma coalmining town called Krebs. This Romanesque structure was the first Catholic Church constructed in Indian Territory, where it served the state's highest concentration of European immigrants—mainly Italians, Poles, Lithuanians, and Mexicans—who came to work in the Pittsburgh County coal mines, centers of United Mine Workers (UMW) influence after 1903. St. Joseph's was built with money from working men and women who, in their desire to create impressive houses of worship, left formidable monuments to their ancestral beliefs and communal values.

Churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues once seemed unrelated to labor history, but in recent years historians have assessed in new ways how both the sacred and the secular permeated the workers' world. For example, in Homestead, where the old Carnegie/U.S. Steel plant was demolished, one can still visit or worship in St. Mary Magdalene Church, where the pastor supported the workers in the epic 1892 lockout, or in the Hungarian Reformed Church, where worker rallies took place. During the Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike of 1968, churches like the Mason Temple and the Clayborn Temple served as the places where leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. rallied workers before planned demonstrations.

Though less visible than massive churches and cathedrals, humbler properties of working-class spiritual and social life also deserve consideration. E. P. Thompson wrote of such places in Britain, where the gentry ruled the countryside and corrupt corporations ruled the towns, but where working people could hold the chapels, taverns, and homes as "their own." In these "unsteepled" places of worship, writes Thompson, "there was room for free intellectual life and democratic experiments."[17] Similar examples exist in the United States like the Paseo Baptist Church in Kansas City, which was the site of the 1937 convention of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP). That year, A. Philip Randolph's union recorded an astounding victory by forcing the Pullman Company to sign a labor agreement with an all-Black union that became, according to BSCP stalwart C. L. Dellums, "the first economic agreement that was ever signed in this country by Negroes with a white institution." It was, he said, "a great inspirational thing to the entire race."[18] Moreover, the 1937 agreement was of great national significance, one of the most important markers since Reconstruction of African American independence from racist paternalism. That such an event has been recorded as part of Black labor history suggests one of the lessons this theme study conveys: that properties of union accomplishments are also places that marked the expansion of freedom and democracy for all citizens.

Religious institutions are also key places in labor history because the linkage of religious expression with union organizing was frequent.[19] The popular union leader and socialist Eugene V. Debs, whose home in Terre Haute has already achieved National Historic Landmark designation (Eugene V. Debs House, NHL, 1966), railed against organized religion, "but he used prophetic Christian imagery to resist corporate excesses." Indeed, Debs described the 1894 Pullman boycott as an expression of that "Christ-like virtue of sympathy."[20] Religious themes also played important roles in certain demonstrations. For instance, during March and April of 1966, striking farm workers in California launched a 300 mile, twenty-five day march from Delano to the state capitol building in Sacramento, designed to end on Easter Sunday. This "peregrinacion" reflected the religious heritage of the largely Catholic Mexican and Filipino workers.[21]

In the realm of working-class leisure, places of Saturday night deserve as much recognition as those of Sunday morning. Bars, dance halls, amusement parks, and such were all sites where working people sought to spend time and their hard-earned money. A few saloons have been suggested for NHL designation, including Pete's Place in Krebs, Oklahoma, an establishment owned by Italian immigrant Pietro Pegari. After being crippled in the mines, Pegari expanded his bungalow to become a restaurant that served potent Choctaw beer to miners during Prohibition.

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[17] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1963), 156.

[18] Quoted in Jack Santino, *Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle: Stories of Black Pullman Porters* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 48.

[19] Gutman led the way in studying the connections between evangelical religion and the labor movement, between praying and organizing, between moral instruction and workers' education. In "Protestantism and the American Labor Movement," he wrote, "Christian perfectionism offered Gilded Age labor reformers absolute values in a time of rapid change" and allowed them to use "timeless truths" in criticizing anti-worker attitudes and actions (Herbert Gutman, "Protestantism and the American Labor Movement," in Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society*, 110).

[20] Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 137, 65.

[21] Patrick H. Mooney and Theo J. Majka, *Farmers and Farm Workers' Movements: Social Protest in American Agriculture* (Twayne Publishers, 1995), 156-157.

The Oklahoma Historical Society promotes the property as a monument that honors the memory of the Italian coal miners who helped to develop coal mining in Oklahoma.

Even sporting properties like ballparks deserve consideration as landmarks of labor history. Although these places might seem to be unrelated to the subject, union-management conflict in professional baseball unfolded in these very parks—first in 1885 with the formation of the National Brotherhood of Professional Ball Players, and five years later when this union formed the short-lived Players' League to break the owners' monopoly.[22] Like their counterparts in White baseball, owners of Negro League teams often treated their players badly in the good old days of the national pastime, but there were exceptions. Cumberland Posey, owner of the popular Homestead Grays of the Negro League, also owned a Pittsburgh night club where Black and White steel workers gathered in 1937 to plot the advance by the Steel Workers Organizing Committee on the Jones and Laughlin (J&L) steel empire.

Workers made popular culture and sporting places their own. Many an organizing rally and strike meeting took place in ball fields and parks, like Mesaba Park in the northern Minnesota iron range, where thousands of workers, including many Finnish socialists, attended summer festivals and rallies for unions, radical organizations, and the powerful Farmer-Labor Party. There were some occasions, such as Labor Day, 1927, when "thousands of Chicagoans assembled at Soldier Field in Grant Park for a celebration to benefit WCFL, the Chicago Federation of Labor's 'Voice of Labor' radio station."[23] In 1955 at the Central Park Arsenal in New York City, 3,000 municipal park workers rallied and marched on city hall to force Mayor Robert Wagner Jr. to overrule his Parks Commissioner, the imperious Robert Moses, and recognize District 37 of the State, County, and Municipal Employees Union. This action paved the way for public employee unionism in the city. Fields of play also became more sinister sites in labor's history, as in Bisbee, Arizona, where at Warren Field in 1917 armed guards assembled striking copper workers before herding them into boxcars and shipping them into the desert. The contested nature of parks and other public places, like markets, squares, and commons, is of great importance in new studies of urban space; moreover, the workers' struggle to find and hold free spaces was central to the effort to gain equal rights and economic justice.[24]

Many of these places of recreation, like sites of work, were sex-segregated spaces. It is therefore important to also recognize leisure properties and activities that were directed towards female workers, particularly in industries that employed large numbers of women. During the 1890s, for example, the Women's Christian Temperance Association of Philadelphia ran a summer house named "Sea Rest" on the Jersey Shore in Asbury Park. This vacation home was specifically for

[22] Allen Guttman, *A Whole New Ball Game: An Interpretation of American Sports* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 64.
[23] Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 137.
[24] See Sara M. Evans and Harry C. Boyte, *Free Spaces: The Sources of Democratic Change in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986) and Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995).

working women in Philadelphia. Women in any occupation, so long as they were Protestant and applied in pairs, were eligible to apply.[25]



International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) dance group at Unity House, 1924
(unknown photographer, NYPL Edith Segal Photographs)

[25] Jerome P. Bjelopera, *City of Clerks: Office and Sales Workers in Philadelphia, 1870-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 110.



General view of Great Hall. Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science & Art, New York, NY, 1973 *(Jack E. Boucher, LOC P&P, HAER NY-20)*

Teaching and Learning
Creating Social Institutions/Movements
Shaping the Political Landscape
Expressing Cultural Values

The "self-educated worker" could be found in many shops, neighborhoods, and in the reading rooms of public libraries and union halls.[26] Privately commissioned libraries such as the Braddock Library (Braddock Library, NHL, 2012), which industrialist Andrew Carnegie constructed for the workers' at his first steel mill in Braddock, Pennsylvania, became a place of learning for workers and their families. Among the properties of formal education, Cooper Union in New York City (Cooper Union, NHL, 1961) is a significant location in labor's intellectual history. Like many places where democratic experiments unfolded, Cooper Union combined education with agitation. Here on the Lower East Side, a young Jewish immigrant named Samuel Gompers, who would become the institutional founder of contemporary organized labor, educated himself by taking free classes in "history, biography, music, mechanics, measurement of speed, elocution, economics, electric power, geography, astronomy, and travels," while participating in the debating club. Years later, he reappeared at the same site—not as a student, but as a speaker—before a throng of young female shirtwaist-makers who called for a general strike in 1909.[27]

[26] See, for example, Irving Howe, World of Our Fathers: The Journey of East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1976), 244-55.
[27] Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor: An Autobiography* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1925), 42, 30.

Other buildings constructed by and for unions reflect a concern for learning, teaching, and cultural life. Union workers built labor temples in many cities and towns as free spaces to gather, hear speakers, and discuss problems. In Collinsville, Illinois, the Miners' Institute Building, constructed by the United Mine Workers in 1916, included union offices as well as a public theater. In Barre, Vermont, one can still visit the Italian Socialist Labor Hall (Socialist Labor Party Hall, NHL, 2000) where stonecutters often assembled. In Katonah, New York, buildings of Brookwood Labor College, where trade unionists studied with radical teachers from 1919 to 1937, still stand. In addition to labor unions, various civic organizations developed during the late nineteenth through early twentieth centuries to assist working people, especially women. In 1882, the New Century Guild in Philadelphia formed to address the needs and concerns of working women, particularly those in white-collar work. In 1906, the Guild opened a center (New Century Guild, NHL, 1993) that provided working women with an array of resources: a restaurant that served noontime meals, a large library, a lecture series, and a health insurance plan.



(L) ***New Century Guild Building, Philadelphia, PA, 1973*** *(George A. Eisenman, LOC P&P, HABS PA-1552)*
(R) ***Entry Hall, New Century Guild, Philadelphia, PA, 1973*** *(George A. Eisenman, LOC P&P, HABS PA-1552)*

Additional properties mark the birthplaces and homes of writers, intellectuals, performers, and reformers who appealed to workers—artists like Carl Sandburg, Upton Sinclair, Grace Lumpkin, and Woody Guthrie. The importance of the radical press, once read widely by working people, could be recognized in two locations connected with the lives of radical publishers Charles Kerr of Chicago and J. A. Wayland of Girard, Kansas, whose socialist periodicals reached thousands of workers in the early 1900s. Though not among the current list of suggested properties, there may be resources that housed the activities of the Workmen's Circle (Arbeiter Ring), a Jewish mutual aid and educational forum that sponsored "lectures, discussions, labor lyceums, Sunday schools and libraries." The various locations of the Women's Trade Union League's (WTUL) activities include places where female wage earners met with middle class allies and labor

activists to develop themselves as articulate advocates, trained activists, and educated women. One of these places, the League's Boston office on Boylston Place, still exists on the edge of Boston Common, not far from Faneuil Hall (Faneuil Hall, NHL, 1960) where the WTUL was founded at the 1903 AFL convention. This building is featured on two people's history walking tours of downtown Boston—the Women's Heritage Trail and the Working People's Heritage Trail.[28]



Woody Guthrie Birthplace, Okemah, OK, 1979 *(Walter Smalling, Jr., LOC P&P, HABS OK-22)*

[28] Quote on the Workmen's Circle from Arthur A. Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehillah Experiment, 1908-1922* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 190-91. For tour guides to Boston people's history sites, see Polly Welts Kaufman, et al., *Boston's Women's Heritage Trail: Seven Self-Guided Walks Through Four Centuries of Boston Women's History* (Gloucester: The Curious Travel Press, 1999) and James Green, *A Working People's Heritage Trail: Guide to a Driving Tour of Labor History Sites in Boston* (Malden: Union City Press, 2001).



Lawrence, Mass. Strikers parading in New York City, 1911 *(LOC P&P, Bain Collection)*

Organizing and Struggling
Creating Social Institutions and Movements
Expressing Cultural Values
Shaping the Political Landscape
Changing Role of the United States in the World Community

Workers' struggles to organize and form unions occurred in every labor occupation addressed in this study. In fact, many of the properties recommended for further study are locations of labor organizing. The political ideologies of American unions run the political spectrum from reformist to radical, from liberal capitalist to socialist, communist, and anarcho-syndicalist. The sheer breadth of labor organizations illustrates the diversity of political thought in the United States labor movement.

While examples of theories and forms of organizing are too numerous to list here, it is worth noting that the motives and values that led workers to organize are complex and contested. For example, the strike phenomenon, central to literature and public perception of union history, has been subjected to new interpretations. Coal mining was one of the most strike-prone industries. Miners' strikes against wage cuts and for wage increases were common, but miners also struck for other goals, including the need to build an industrial union that could gain recognition from a chaotic industry. This development climaxed with the founding of the United Mine Workers of America in 1890 at the Columbus, Ohio City Hall. Union miners struck to defend or exert workers' control at the pitface and to gain freedom from company domination in the coal fields, as in the case of West Virginia's mine wars in which miners fought for civil liberties in a highly restrictive environment. This conflict, which erupted in 1912 and resumed in 1919, centered less

on wage demands and union recognition than on civil liberties—freedom of speech and assembly, freedom from the industrial feudalism of company towns, and freedom from the terrorism inflicted by the operators' hired gunmen. The struggle that culminated in 1921 with a march of armed miners intent on liberating Logan County from company rule is one of many examples that illustrate how labor history is inextricably tied to a larger historical theme: the fight to extend constitutional liberties to all citizens.[29]

There is no way to quantify the history of labor activism, but more union activity probably occurred in the extractive industries than in the manufacturing industries. The level of conflict and the corresponding loss of life in the American mining industry are of national significance. These sites are more difficult to mark than manufacturing sites because of the transient nature of extractive industries and the fragility of the environments they created. But there are "ghost towns," and there are bodies buried nearby—the remains of victims of industrial violence. For example, one suggestion for consideration is the location of the 1897 Lattimer massacre in Pennsylvania, where organized labor memorializes the nineteen Polish, Slovakian, and Lithuanian coal miners killed by sheriff's deputies. This property represents more than the bloody ground of bitter conflict; it draws public attention to a place where striking immigrant miners presented their papers as naturalized citizens to the sheriff, trusting that their new and highly-prized citizenship would protect them.[30]

The Lattimer massacre, writes historian Perry Blatz, "is one of a number of well-known episodes in American history in which law enforcement officials overreacted pathologically to reasonably peaceful labor protest."[31] At locations like this, the public can consider a disturbing fact: American workers who loved their democratic government often became the victims of brutal state repression. At Ludlow, Colorado (Ludlow Tent Colony Site, NHL, 2009), one can view the pit where the women and children were suffocated after National Guard troops burned their tent colony in the violent 1914 Colorado mine war. A monument, erected by the United Mine Workers of America, mourns the death of these innocents, the civilian casualties of industrial wars. The U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations concluded in 1915 that workers "shared an almost universal conviction that they, both as individuals and as a class, are denied justice," that employers had used law enforcement in a "bitterly partisan" manner, and that the denial of workers' rights had caused industrial violence.[32]

Labor conflicts in the mining industry often elicited a community response that called on female leaders, like Mary Septek who mobilized women after the Lattimer massacre.[33] The communal

[29] Jon Amsden and Stephen Brier, "Coal Miners on Strike: The Transformation of Strike Demands and the Formation of a National Union," *Journal of Inter-Disciplinary History* 7, no. 4 (Spring 1977): 583-616; David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 18-22; and David A. Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 95-99, 195-96, 200.

[30] Victor R. Green, *The Slavic Community on Strike: Immigrant Labor in Pennsylvania Anthracite* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 130-44.

[31] Perry K. Blatz, Democratic Miners: Work and Labor Relations in the Anthracite Coal Industry, 1875-1925 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 55.

[32] Graham Adams Jr., Age of Industrial Violence, 1910-1915: The Activities and Findings of the United States Commission on Industrial Relations (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 217-219.

[33] Green, The Slavic Community on Strike, 133-44.

response to injustice is also evident as a labor history theme in the bloody hills and hollows of West Virginia's coal country. Cecil Roberts, the current President of the United Mine Workers of America, whose great-uncle led the miners' march on Blair Mountain in 1921, testified before Congress on the need to save the mountain from strip mining so that it could be a future national park. But it was more than that, Roberts argued, as he learned by listening to his grandmother talk about labor activist Mary Harris "Mother" Jones and his great-uncle talk about the armed march of 1921: he "learned early on that if you look at the battle of Blair Mountain as one event then you miss its significance much as you would if you examined the Battle of Gettysburg without considering its role in the Civil War as a whole." In their march to free Logan County from the mine operators' hired guns, West Virginians acted not as seditious rioters but as citizens redeeming their state from a rule of terror.[34]



Strike leaders in Ward, WV, where sixty families were evicted from company-owned homes, 1931 *(Getty Images)*

[34] Cecil Roberts, speaking before the U.S. House Committee on Mining and Natural Resources (February 21, 1991). Quoted in Green, *Taking History to Heart*, 147-165, which includes a fuller examination of places of conflict in the South.



Rodrigo Terronez Memorial Clinic, Forty Acres, Delano, CA, a property closely associated with the life of Cesar Chavez and the history of the farm worker movement, 2012 *(James W. Rosenthal, LOC P&P, HABS CA-2878-C)*

Recognizing the Diversity of Work Experience in America

Two primary objectives of this study are to assist in the process of identifying new properties of labor history for National Historic Landmark designation and to help in reinterpreting previously designated NHLs for their significance in labor history as well.

It is easy to be awed by the size and complexity of industrial architecture and by the power of machinery, but what may be learned about labor history at these places of technological wonder? Most industrial properties recognize entrepreneurship, engineering genius, marketing skill, and architectural achievement, but only in rare cases accord recognition to human labor. However, many extant factory resources create settings in which the public can appreciate the human element in the industrial equation as well. Properties that are currently recognized for technological innovation and their importance in American economic development, such as the automobile plants in and around Detroit, were also critical locations in the history of working-class migrations, unionism, and labor processes—and need to be recognized as such.[35]

The Flint General Motors and Ford Dearborn locations mark events of great national significance and offer important lessons for the public. The 1937 sit-down strikes in Flint represented organized labor's most important tactical breakthrough in seeking recognition from giant corporations. The Flint plant represents an important marker in the long search for workers' power that began after the Civil War. Many events of national significance also took place at

[35] For further information on properties recommended for updates on their nomination content, please consult the section "National Historic Landmarks Recommended for Amendment."

Ford's Rouge complex in Dearborn (Ford River Rouge Complex, NHLD, 1978). The 1941 revolt by the United Auto Workers was critical because it forced Henry Ford to sign an agreement with his own workers. Of the many strikes in the era of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), this confrontation might have been the most significant because of Ford's importance. He was the father of mass production and of modern industrial control exercised through a remarkable mix of authoritarianism and paternalism.[36] The 1941 Ford strike marked the decisive influence of the federal government in allowing industrial unions to leverage corporations. It joined a young generation of Black civil rights leaders with union activists and allowed workers to declare independence from corporate control and to redefine Americanism in more democratic ways. Once a fearsome workplace, a cauldron of ethnic, racial, and religious antipathy, the Rouge became something else after 1941: the location of the world's largest union, Ford UAW Local 600, with thousands of members who called each other brother and sister.[37]

To recognize the geographical and social breadth of labor history, certain considerations must be acknowledged to ensure that the designation of future properties and the reinterpretations of existing NHLs reflect current scholarship in the field of labor and working-class history.



National Labor Relations Board election for union representation at the River Rouge Ford plant, Dearborn, MI, 1941 *(Arthur Siegal, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

[36] For a discussion of the way photos of the Rouge site can be used to dramatize historic events in labor history see Green, *Taking History to Heart*, 174-180.

[37] James R. Green, *The World of the Worker: Labor in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1980), 155-67, 178.


UNITY OF WHITE AND NEGRO WORK-ERS
FIGHT OR STAR
WE DEMAND WORK OR WAGES
FIGHT POLICE BRUTALITY
FULL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY FOR NEGROS
7 HOUR DAY 5 DAY WEEK

Labor protesters with signs: "Full Social and Economic Equality for Negros," "Unity of White-and-Negro Workers," etc., 1930 *(LOC P&P, Harris & Ewing Collection)*

Minority Recognition

Periods of labor strife like strikes are important events in labor history, partly because they reveal an important aspect of the social history of labor in the United States: the intersections among different racial and ethnic groups in the effort to gain union recognition. While the labor movement has been tinged with racism and nativism, during strike periods workers of various backgrounds joined together—transcending common prejudices—in the effort to push through their demands. In the 1890s, Black and White free miners physically resisted the system of convict labor in the mines around Briceville, Tennessee. During the Steel Workers Organizing Committee drives prior to the CIO, Black, White, and immigrant steel workers organized in communities surrounding the Sparrow's Point steel plant in Baltimore County, Maryland. When the Farm Workers Union organized strikes and boycotts in the 1960s, workers of Filipino and Mexican descent worked together to improve conditions for farm laborers in California.

The association of properties with different ethnic, racial, religious, and gender groups—and the ways in which they intersected—should be considered when designating sites of labor history. These aspects have received scrutiny in the new labor history; however, the *places* associated with minority recognition and interactions have attracted less attention from labor and social historians whose interests have often centered on specific industries. Transportation firms, retail and commercial establishments, and the service sector may particularly represent opportunities to explore these neglected aspects of labor history. Some of the urban transportation properties suggested offer interesting possibilities in this regard. For example, in Boston, at the Back Bay Station, which now serves both Amtrak trains and metropolitan transit, the work of the city's Black porters and dining car waiters is commemorated by an impressive statue of A. Philip Randolph and six permanent panels filled with photos and oral history quotations that publicize

the African American railroad employees who worked out of the station and lived in the nearby community. The Back Bay Station display marks a historically significant urban work location with an integrated presentation of working-class and Black history.[38]

Racism segregated work and workers in irrational ways, such that workers in multiracial industries had to overcome remarkable barriers to unionization. There were moments, notably on the New Orleans docks, when White and Black workers found a rationale for solidarity and practiced it, such as the general strike of 1892, which the transportation essay describes. The essay also shows the exceptional character of interracial solidarity in transportation. Pervasive segregation ruled the industry, especially the railroads, constructed by segregated gangs and operated by segregated work crews. Blacks were restricted mainly to jobs as firemen and brakemen or as cooks, porters, and waiters on passenger trains. The achievements of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the Dining Car Waiters Union are those of workers who turned railroad job segregation into a basis for organizing the most powerful organization of poor Blacks in the United States after the fall of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association.[39]

Recognizing the racial and ethnic diversity of labor history will not only broaden the public understanding of the participants in labor and working-class history, but it will also help in drawing connections to other theme studies, such as those on American Latino history, LGBTQ history, Asian American and Pacific Islander history, and the history of Reconstruction.


TRABAJADORES DE FACTORIA
LOS Obreros del Campo estamos
en HUELGA y necesitamos vuestra
Cooperacion. Nuestra Causa es la
de ustedes. Suplicamos no tra
bajen hasta no triunfar en nues
tras Peticiones.
¡A LA HUELGA TODOS!
C.G.T.

Strikers on the picket line at a sugar mill, Yabucoa, Puerto Rico, 1941 *(Jack Delano, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

[38] See James R. Green and Robert C. Hayden, "A. Philip Randolph and Boston's African American Railroad Worker," *Trotter Review* 6, no. 2 (1992): 20-23, available from William Monroe Trotter Institute, University of Massachusetts Boston.

[39] Green and Hayden, "A. Philip Randolph and Boston's African American Railroad Worker," 21.





*(L)**Two women strikers on picket line during the "Uprising of the 20,000," New York City, Feb. 1910** (LOC P&P, Bain); (R) **National women's trade union league emblem, c. 1908** (LOC P&P)*

Gender

Of all the properties identified for their association with organized labor, few are associated with tasks that occupied mostly women, such as teaching, clerical, and retail work. An exceptional case is that of public school teachers, who began organizing early in the 1900s. Teacher unionism is remarkable because, unlike unions associated with other occupations in which women constituted a majority, these unions often chose women as leaders. Women also became important participants in organizing male-dominated industries, as illustrated by women's participation in the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters' Strike. Furthermore, notable radical organizers such as Mother Jones, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Emma Tenayuca, and Anne Burlak Timpson organized both men and women into industrial unions.

Occupations that were dominated by female labor include retail, farm labor, and textile manufacturing. In the last category, a significant location that highlights women's work is the Fulton Bag factory in Atlanta. In an essay on the 1914 strike at this factory, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall explores the career of labor organizer and strike leader O. Delight Smith. Hall writes about the role of "women, as workers, and as workers' wives" in the milieu created by AFL craft unions in hundreds of locals, central labor bodies, and ladies' auxiliaries around the country.[40] The Fulton Bag property suggests a number of opportunities for integrating industrial history with both labor and women's history. Here the public may visit a place featuring factory structures and offering opportunities for learning about how paternalistic employers treated workers. The Fulton Company records at nearby Georgia Tech provide documentation through accounts of labor spies, which could be used to show how and why textile workers responded to union organizers like Delight Smith.[41] Other places of manufacturing that primarily employed

[40] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "O. Delight Smith's Progressive Era: Labor, Feminism and Reform in the Urban South," in *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism*, eds. Nancy A. Hewitt and Susan Lebsock (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 166-67.

[41] Robert C. McMath Jr., "History by a Graveyard: The Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills Records," *Labor's Heritage*, 4 (1989): 5-9.

women can reveal the important roles that women played in labor organizing. During the late 1920s through early 1930s, textile mills became sites of major labor uprisings, even in regions typically hostile to organized labor. For instance, the Loray Mill in Gastonia, North Carolina was the site of a significant labor strike in 1929, in which women organizers like Ella May Wiggins, a worker and songwriter who was killed by company guards, played important roles. Over fifteen years later, the Cigar Factory in Charleston, South Carolina became the location of another important southern strike in 1945-1946, an effort that was primarily led by female, African American cigar workers.

In addition to recognizing new properties that illustrate the gendered nature of labor, current NHLs can be reinterpreted to include a more representative history. This is especially significant in the field of retail work, which women had come to dominate by the twentieth century. For instance, the large retailer Macy's Herald Square (R. H. Macy and Company Store, New York, New York, NHL, 1978) is recognized for its significance in architecture and in shaping the nature of consumerism. Yet, this was also a location of labor for the hundreds of women who worked as salesclerks. Reinterpreting places such as this one would serve to present a more inclusive understanding not only of this retail center, but of labor history more generally.



R.H. Macy and Co., New York, NY, c. 1905 *(LOC P&P, Detroit)*




(L) ***Ludlow Massacre Memorial, Trinidad, CO, n.d.*** *(National Historic Landmark Program files);*
(R) ***Haymarket Martyrs' Monument, Forest Park, IL n.d.*** *(National Historic Landmark Program files)*

Memorials and Commemoration

As each chapter of this study illustrates, labor history is a violent history. Both this study and the Labor Archeology Theme Study identify locations where strikers were massacred by opposition forces, places where union labor fought with company guards and law enforcement, and places where individual leaders were murdered because of their efforts to organize workers. It is important to identify these properties because they, along with the memorials that were erected to honor the dead, provide a conceptual entry point for examining how this history has been remembered and commemorated around the country.

The reality of violent conflict is represented by a well-known labor history location—Haymarket Square (Chicago), the scene of the 1886 bombing and riot in which seven police and at least forty protestors died. Anarchists were later convicted of the bombing and executed in spite of widespread protests. Conflicts erupted over the designation of the Haymarket property and the memorializing of two radically different groups of casualties—police and anarchists. In William Adelman's guide to the area for the Illinois Labor History Society, he describes the tempestuous history of Haymarket Square. A statue to honor the dead police officers was dedicated on Memorial Day 1889. Then, in 1903, part of the inscription was stolen, and later a streetcar operator ran his train off the track and knocked the statuary policeman off its base. The reckless motorman said he was tired of seeing that policeman with his arm raised in the air. After being moved to a different location twice, the statue was bombed in 1968 and again in 1970 by

protestors who, like the anarchists of 1886, had problems with the Chicago police. Finally, the statue was moved far away to the lobby of Police Headquarters.[42]

Perhaps such "interpretations of conflict . . . may provoke further conflict," if not Chicago-style violence. But, as Thomas Schlereth argues, those who have taken on the task of presenting difficult themes have often been rewarded with positive response from members of the public who appreciate "candor and courage" in remembering disturbing or even disgusting events.[43]

Public art illustrating themes of labor were not restricted to memorials and monuments, however. For instance, many of the public murals commissioned under the Federal One projects of the Works Progress Administration feature scenes of local and regional labor. A major work of art that had a significant influence on the development of this program was the Detroit Industry Murals, painted by Diego Rivera from 1932-1933. Diego Rivera, a leader in the Mexican Mural Movement of the 1920s, maintained strongly progressive political and artistic views, one of which was an ardent belief that art should be for public enjoyment. This series of paintings, largely funded by the Ford Motor Company, depict the history of manufacturing in Detroit, with a special emphasis on the Ford River Rouge Plant (Detroit Industry Murals, NHL, 2013). The series of fresco paintings explore the relationships between male workers—both African American and White—and machines, workers and management.

Monuments and memorials can also demonstrate how labor was represented in working-class culture. For instance, the Haymarket Martyr's Monument for the five men convicted in the bombing (four of whom were executed, and one of whom committed suicide in jail) in Forest Home Cemetery, Illinois (Haymarket Martyr's Monument, NHL, 1997) reflect the nineteenth-century iconography of labor symbolized by a male figure. This male imagery carried through into the twentieth century and is well represented in public art sponsored by the New Deal. "Treatments of labor were steeped in ideologies of manhood," writes Barbara Melosh. Depictions of wage labor "consistently excluded . . . women's productive work" emphasizing instead female dependency on the "manly worker."[44]

These public art projects rarely presented controversial images of male workers as victims. The exception can be seen in two WPA mural scenes in the old Rincon Square Post Office on San Francisco's Embarcadero. These scenes depict the stories of Thomas Joseph Mooney and Warren K. Billings, labor radicals jailed for allegedly bombing a 1916 military preparedness parade, along with the images of the workers killed in the 1934 general strike on the nearby docks. Occasionally, women were also represented within this theme of labor martyrdom—for example, in the Ludlow massacre monument and in the memorial to organizer Fannie Sellins, murdered in Pennsylvania during the 1919 steel strike. For the most part, however, women are excluded from labor's heroic iconography as represented in monuments and other art forms. As

[42] William J. Adelman, *Haymarket Revisited*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Illinois Labor History Society, 1976), 39-40. This little booklet is a model of what can be done to educate the public about the places of labor history. For a consideration of why the events at Haymarket remained such an important focus of working class memory for so long, see Green, *Taking History to Heart*, 121-146.

[43] Thomas Schlereth, Cultural History and Material Culture: Everyday Life, Landscapes, Museums (UMI Research Press, 1990), 369.

[44] Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 83.

Elizabeth Faue explains, this exclusion reflects a kind of historical amnesia about the role of women in the community-based organizing campaigns that often preceded formal union recognition.[45]



Anton Refregier, History of San Francisco mural "The Waterfront," Rincon Annex Post Office, San Francisco, CA, 2012 *(LOC P&P, CMH)*

Conclusion

The dominant themes in the history of American labor represent a bygone era. Fewer Americans than in the past have a direct connection to the stories that figure prominently in the writings of labor historians: organized labor, strikes and protest, and negotiations for better wages and working conditions. With the transformation of the United States economy from manufacturing to the service-sector in the second half of the twentieth century, the period in which blue-collar labor peaked now lies beyond the nation's collective memory. In the late 1940s, nearly half of the American workforce was employed in blue-collar jobs. By 2000, that figure had declined to 29 percent.[46] In many settings, the experience of work today is fundamentally different than it was only a few decades ago. Explaining the challenges and struggles faced by the labor movement promises to bring recognition to the accomplishments of American labor.

In the effort to tell the full story of American labor in the past and its effects on the present, this study emphasizes both the diversity of the working-class experience in America and the multi-cultural dimensions of labor history scholarship as it has developed during the past several decades. This diversity is based on the particular experiences of ethnicity, race, region, religion, nationality, and gender, as well as on the experiences of collective work and struggle. Labor's epic story, told in all its diversity, highlights important themes in national history. Together, the suggested properties emphasize the centrality of work in the lives of the majority of American people throughout history—slave and free, male and female, native and foreign born. These

[45] Elizabeth Faue, Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 73-78.

[46] "Occupational Employment and Wages, 2002," U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC, http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ocwage.nr0.htm. This paragraph contributed by Dan Vivian, National Park Service.

places may help the public understand how important working people have been to the nation's physical and economic development.

Although organized labor had a mixed record on social inclusivity, its larger struggle for economic welfare and human dignity included benefits for all Americans: the eight-hour day, the free weekend, the end of child labor, unemployment and old age insurance, occupational health and safety, and more. Marking labor history on the national landscape will help Americans understand labor's struggle for economic freedom, social security, the development of civic freedom, and representative democracy. These historic properties show how the workers' search for power, and the union movement's struggle for recognition, advanced a crusade to protect civil rights and liberties and to expand democracy. In at least two ways—economic and civic—labor history really is American history.



Ford workers carrying American flag and union banners in the Labor Day parade, Detroit, MI, 1942
(Arthur Siegal, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)

FROM SUNUP TO SUNDOWN: AGRICULTURAL LABOR[1]



Migrant laborers pick tomatoes in fields near Homestead, FL, 1939 *(Marion Post Walcott, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

The United States, historian Richard Hofstadter wrote, "was born in the country and moved to the city."[2] Rural agriculture and agricultural labor shaped American culture, society, economics, and politics from the beginning of the colonial period. The independent, White, male farmer was revered in literature of the early national period; leading figures like Thomas Jefferson lauded him as industrious, independent, and self-sufficient—the ideal citizen of the fledgling democratic nation. By the early nineteenth century, this agrarian ideal had moved from the realm of intellectual writings and into popular discourse, precisely at the same time that agriculture in the United States was moving towards commodification, and the patterns of agrarian life were beginning to change irrevocably.

Farmers and agricultural laborers were hardly a cohesive lot. Not only were they racially and ethnically diverse, but they also were divided by geography, topography, climate, and, of course,

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[1] Rachel Donaldson, Associate Professor of History at College of Charleston, prepared this essay. Dr. Donaldson has published on the cultural politics of the folk music revival. She is a historian of labor and cultural history and a historic preservationist.

[2] Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F. D. R.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 23.

the products that they produced. Despite these numerous differences, they shared many similarities, particularly regarding their work experiences and common economic woes.

Like the other chapters in this study, this one focuses on "free" labor, rather than the labor of enslaved people. The institution of chattel slavery played a crucial role in the development of American agriculture. The forced labor of enslaved men, women, and children extended from small farms of the Northeast to midsized tobacco farms of the middle South and powered massive cotton plantations stretching from the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina to California. The system proved fundamental in shaping patterns of labor and the growth of the American economy. In the South, the transition from slavery to freedom was fraught with broken promises and enslavement by other means—be it debt peonage that tied people to the land or convict labor that was slavery in kind, if not in name. The significance of the institution of slavery not just to agricultural history, but also to American history as a whole, demonstrates the need for a theme study devoted to slavery in its own right. Addressing this complicated history on a surface level here would not do it justice.

Yet, at the same time that this chapter examines the experiences of "free" agricultural workers, it is clear that "free" labor does not mean labor devoid of exploitation. Farm workers were often subject to unjust and unsafe conditions similar to those endured by industrial workers; tenant farmers were mired in cycles of debt from which the possibility of breaking free was nearly nonexistent. As such, attempts to organize farmers and then farm workers in order to increase their economic and political standing, as well as to enhance their job safety and security, are critical to the story of American labor.

Like all Americans, farmers and farm workers were profoundly affected by major national and international events. Despite variations in the types of products that they grew or raised for markets, they all experienced the economic gains and setbacks of war, depression, drought, federal policy, land consolidation, and other such issues. Therefore, in order to understand the forces that both united and divided farmers and farm workers and shaped their work experiences, this chapter will trace the evolution of agricultural labor across the farming regions in the United States and its territories in a chronological manner.

By the time that the "agrarian myth," the term that Hofstadter applies to the idealized view of the small independent farmer, became a staple in popular culture, farmers were anything but independent subsistence farmers. While this process occurred at different rates across the country, farmers were becoming dependent on the same kinds of economic and commercial powers that determined industrial development. Rather than being remnants of a preindustrial past, American farmers both shaped and were shaped by the forces of modernity.[3] Therefore, this study explores the ways in which nationally significant social, political, economic, and cultural trends and events influenced and altered the nature of agricultural work. Through it all, the focus is on the experience of the *workers* rather than the work process.

Furthermore, this chapter focuses on agricultural labor as a commercial enterprise rather than as a story of traditional yeomanry. Like the other chapters in this study, the focus here is on the development of a labor system within a capitalist economy. The subjects of this study either

[3] Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 24-25.

produced primarily for the market or worked for wages that they spent elsewhere, rather than focusing on producing for their own consumption. As such, the history of the self-subsistent family farm is also not explored, except in those cases where the yeoman ideal shaped cultural trends and political policies.[4] By the later decades of the nineteenth century, farmers saw themselves as a distinct group of laborers, subject to the same economic injustices as industrial laborers during a time when "the lords of wealth rode roughshod over the public."[5] Farmers, therefore, advocated political and economic reforms similar to those for which their industrial counterparts fought. As such, this story of agricultural labor in the United States begins at precisely the point when farmers and farm workers adopted an identity as a specialized set of producers and secured their place in the pantheon of American laborers.



(L) ***Oklahoma Dugout c. 1909*** *(LOC P&P, Detroit); (R)* ***Minnesota dugout reflecting Scandinavian heritage, c.1906*** *(LOC P&P Detroit)*

The Upper Midwest and Great Plains: Immigration and Migration

The lure of America, particularly for European immigrants and migrants, lay in the abundance of land. Land consolidation, famines, pogroms, revolutions, and general political shifts in European nations caused many to look westward for new opportunities. As land became increasingly scarce and expensive in the eastern region of the United States, farmers, both immigrant and native-born, moved further west. During the 1830s and 1840s settlements in the western Great Lakes region and upper Midwest expanded rapidly. Native-born tenants and small independent farmers formed a migration stream that flowed from New England into the western territories; soon, immigrants from Northern Europe and Scandinavia joined them. The Federal Government enhanced this migration by enacting land policies that encouraged settlement in the region. The first, passed in 1854, gave squatters the right to own land that had not yet been surveyed, provided that they demonstrate that they had made improvements to the land and intended to stay there. During the Civil War, the Republican Congress passed the even more significant Homestead Act in 1862. Similar to the first law, the Act enabled any head of household, male citizen, or white ethnic who had applied for citizenship over the age of 21 to acquire 160 acres of

[4] Many issues pertaining to the history of agricultural development can be found in the Theme Study *Agriculture and the Farmer's Frontier*. While this study covers these broader perspectives, it was published in 1963 and is currently out of print, signaling the need to revise and update this theme study.

[5] Robert Heilbroner, The Worldly Philosophers: The Lives, Times, and Ideas of the Great Economic Thinkers, 3rd ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 217.

land at no cost, provided that they live on the land and improve it through plowing, building fences, and constructing buildings. Afterwards, that person would be granted title to the land.[6]

Homesteading spread across the northern and central plains, led in part by many White ethnic immigrants from Northern Europe who were eligible for citizenship. Railroad companies, which had benefitted tremendously from the Homestead Act, also worked to recruit people to settle on land that they owned adjacent to railroad tracks. Companies sent agents to Germany, Scandinavia, and England to sell large tracts at low costs to whole communities, knowing that a successful colony would attract more immigrants and the company would reap the economic benefits. Soon, ethnic religious societies also contributed to the European colonization of the Plains during the mid-nineteenth century by recruiting members to settle in the West. Of all the initial immigrant groups, the one with the highest population in the Plains were the Germans, who primarily concentrated in Nebraska. Most of these immigrants were farmers, and, as such, they tended to move into farming regions rather than the developing urban centers. Another group that constituted a large percentage of the population of this region was Norwegian immigrants. Norwegian immigration came in a series of waves during the nineteenth century, the largest occurring in the periods 1866-1873, 1880-1893, and 1900-1920.[7]

While the terms of the Homestead Act mandated that homesteaders demonstrate improvements to the land in order to claim title, the early settlers *had* to make improvements in order to survive, especially through their first winter. The homesteaders' initial focus on farming for sustenance was reflected in their dwellings, shelters that had to be constructed quickly and inexpensively. In the upper Midwest, a typical dwelling was the dugout house. This was a form of habitation that was common in Scandinavia that the Scandinavian immigrants adapted to their new homes on the plains, a region that lacked an abundance of other building materials like wood. As the archeological excavations of the Christopherson/Goulson dugout house in Swedona Township, Swift County, Minnesota reveal, families could live in the dwellings for years as the members focused their efforts on making a new life in the Midwest.[8]

While African Americans made strides in land ownership after the Civil War, in many ways the story of landowning farmers in the United States is a White story. After all, only those immigrants who qualified as White, according to nineteenth century definitions of whiteness, could benefit from the provisions of the Homestead Act. Some areas would even pass laws specifically designed to prohibit particular racial and ethnic minorities from owning land. Even without these legal restrictions, many people of ethnic and racial minority groups lacked the necessary capital to purchase land, either because of their pecuniary circumstances as immigrants

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[6] Donald W. Linebaugh, "Excavating the Dugout House of Norwegian Immigrant Anna Byberg Christopherson Goulson, Swift County, Minnesota," *Historical Archaeology* 39 (2005): 65; R. Douglas Hurt, *American Agriculture: A Brief History* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994), 187-88.

[7] Linebaugh, "Excavating the Dugout House of Norwegian Immigrant Anna Byberg Christopherson Goulson," 68; Frederick C. Luebke, "Ethnic Group Settlement on the Great Plains," in *Immigrants on the Land: Agriculture, Rural Life, and Small Towns*, ed. George E. Pozzetta (New York: Garland Publishers, 1991), 166. See also John C. Hudson, "Migration to an American Frontier," in *Immigrants on the Land*; Jon Gjerde, *From Peasants To Farmers: The Migration From Balestrand, Norway, To The Upper Middle West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[8] Linebaugh, "Excavating the Dugout House of Norwegian Immigrant Anna Byberg Christopherson Goulson," 63-64.

or because they had been only recently freed from chattel slavery. Yet, this did not stop many, particularly African Americans from the Deep South, from trying to partake in the migration stream flooding into the Great Plains. In 1879, thousands of formerly enslaved people moved from southern states to Kansas. Labeled the "Exodusters," almost 40,000 African Americans traveled up the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. The most notable colony of Black homesteaders began in Nicodemus in Graham County, Kansas (Nicodemus Historic District, NHL, 1996), with a population of 595 in 1910. While these pioneers sought to escape the racial oppression of the South, they encountered similar discrimination in the Plains states. Many ended up returning to the South, but those who stayed formed tightly knit all-Black communities. Between 1890 and 1910, twenty-five of these communities formed in the eastern half of Oklahoma, towns like Langston and Boley, which increased Oklahoma's population of African Americans to 137,000.[9]



(L) ***Early homestead, Nicodemus Historic District, Nicodemus, KS, n.d.*** *(LOC P&P, HABS KS-49)*
(R) ***Townsite and First church, Nicodemus Historic District, Nicodemus, KS, c.1885*** *(LOC P&P, HABS KS-49)*

[9] Luebke, "Ethnic Group Settlement on the Great Plains," in *Immigrants on the Land*, 179-80. See also Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992).



Cotton sharecropper, Greene County, GA, 1937 *(Dorothea Lange, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

The South

The Exodusters were largely fleeing the racial persecution that accompanied the end of Reconstruction and beginning of the Redeemer political rule in the South, a political shift marked by the increase of racially discriminatory Jim Crow laws and lynchings that marked the southern return to home rule. Much like the upper Midwest and Plains region, the Southeast was largely an agrarian society. Although the region was not devoid of industry and industrialization began to pick up speed in the 1870s and 1880s (notably in the development of New South cities like Birmingham, Alabama), much of the region remained as it had prior to the Civil War: an agrarian economy rooted in the mono-crop farming of cash crops like tobacco, sugar, cotton, and rice.

There was, however, one major change: no longer were the large plantations that dominated the southern economy operated by slave labor. After generations of working on the land, formerly enslaved people believed that they had a right to it, and many sought to attain the independence afforded by subsistence farming. For instance, prior to the war, the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina were marked by massive rice and cotton plantations operated by the gang labor of thousands of enslaved people. When Union troops arrived in Port Royal, South Carolina in 1861, the few Whites in the area fled, leaving a community of approximately 10,000 slaves on their own. The slaves had maintained a degree of relative autonomy even beforehand, and once the planters left, they immediately destroyed the vestiges of the cash crop economy and began planting corn and potatoes for their own subsistence. Yet they were not able to hold on to the land for long. When Treasury agents auctioned off the land for nonpayment of taxes in 1863 and 1864, only a fraction of it went to former slaves who were able to pool together their resources to

purchase it as a community. Most of the former slaves were again reduced to plantation laborers, this time for meager wages.

This is just one instance of the tension between how northern military leaders believed the southern economy should be reconstructed and how the formerly enslaved people believed it should. Immediately after the war, the military began to grapple with the vast amount of confiscated and abandoned land in the South, much of which consisted of plantations that former slaves took over after the planter families fled, and much of which eventually returned to the former owners. The Southern Homestead Act of 1866 only provided 2.9 million acres to 27,800 African American families in the region, and much of it was of poor quality. This was especially troubling because most of the newly-emancipated families that sought land did not have the means to procure it. Most of the property stayed in the hands of the same families that had been landowners during the antebellum period; other land fell into the hands of northern speculators who became a new class of absentee landowners.[10]

During the initial period of Reconstruction, the Freedmen's Bureau (the military organization that oversaw Reconstruction) envisioned postwar southern society for the freed slaves as consisting of a mix of independent farmers and contract laborers working for White planters. Yet Bureau officials almost immediately abandoned that idea and, beginning in 1866, adopted a policy of contract labor in which they encouraged almost all former slaves to sign contracts to work on White-owned plantations. Bureau officials believed that "by voluntarily signing and adhering to contracts, both planters and freedmen would develop the habits of a free labor economy," according to historian Eric Foner. However, the contract system was hardly "free labor," given that Bureau officials coerced or forced freedmen to sign contracts that White planters crafted (with army consent) providing extremely low, or nonexistent, wages and containing stipulations allowing planters to intervene in the workers' personal lives. Furthermore, according to the contracts, Black workers could even face fines or imprisonment if they went on strike for higher wages.[11] In light of these conditions, many sought to escape and support themselves through subsistence farming. For instance, in the lowcountry of South Carolina during the years immediately following the end of the war, some freed people attempted to avoid the contract system by cultivating small plots of land in the pinelands along the Santee River near Georgetown. However, conditions of starvation and emotional ties to their previous homes eventually forced many to return to the former plantations as agricultural contract laborers.[12]

Working for wages as agricultural laborers, however, was not what southern African Americans had envisioned for themselves after gaining their freedom. The lack of autonomy from former masters that accompanied the new contract labor system was a particularly bitter pill for the recently emancipated to swallow. In the midst of this, a new agricultural system of farm tenancy developed: sharecropping. Under sharecropping, individual families signed contracts with planter-landlords to take charge of a plot of land, rather than working as gang laborers across the plantation as a whole. In general, sharecroppers could keep a third of their yearly crop when

[10] Leslie A. Schwalm, A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 190-211.
[11] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988), 166.
[12] Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We*, 190-211.

planters furnished all necessary tools, seed, animals, and fertilizer; they could keep half if they supplied those necessities themselves. The system may have begun as early as 1867 in Mississippi, according to one newspaper account, but it spread throughout the region at varying rates over the following decades. African Americans tended to opt for sharecropping over agricultural wage work because it gave them a greater deal of autonomy—they farmed with their families rather than in gangs ruled by White overseers, an arrangement that bore little distinction from conditions of slavery. Landowners favored sharecropping because it stabilized the workforce and provided land-poor planters with a way around the contract problems of cash and credit shortages that plagued the southern economy in the aftermath of the Civil War. One example of a plantation that became a network of sharecropping plots was Barrow's Plantation near Oglethorpe, Georgia. Although the boundaries of the plantation did not change after the war, maps of the area reveal how dwellings changed from tightly-organized slave cabins to a more scattered network of sharecroppers' homes.[13]

Although many initially viewed the new system as a solution to the problems of gang labor plantation agriculture in the years following emancipation, sharecropping and tenant farming were not restricted to African Americans. Formerly independent White farmers also joined the new class of southern tenant farmers. Many were from agricultural regions in the South but could not afford to buy land; others were urban-to-rural migrants who came to the countryside during the economic depressions of the late nineteenth century; still others were former landowners who had lost their land due to crop failure or a variety of other economic problems. Tenant farmers had their own socio-economic stratification, with cash tenants at the top (those who paid yearly cash rent for land only), followed by share-tenants (those who provided most of their farming and domestic necessities but had to take out a line of credit with landlords for furnishing the rest), followed by sharecroppers at the bottom (for whom the landlord supplied all necessities on credit and the labor was provided by the cropper and his family).[14]

Despite the hope among rural African Americans that sharecropping would bring a higher degree of autonomy and even economic advancement, the system soon revealed its exploitative tendencies. Those at the bottom, who had to have all their supplies furnished by the landowner or local merchant, had to put a lien on the harvest for repayment. The landlords or furnishing merchants therefore required these tenants to only grow cash crops, sometimes up to their cabin doors, which left no room for personal gardens. Thus, the tenant had to purchase all necessities, which pushed them into greater debt with the furnisher.[15] This essentially led to a system of debt peonage in which the debt that tenants owed to the landlord or merchant carried on through the following year such that they were never able to settle their debts and leave the land if they so

[13] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 51-53, 162-66, 173-74; Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 166.

[14] David Eugene Conrad, *The Forgotten Farmers: The Story of Sharecroppers in the New Deal* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 6. See also Ronald L. Davis, *Good and Faithful Labor: From Slavery to Sharecropping in the Natchez District, 1860-1890* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981); C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951); Gilbert Fite, *Cotton Fields No More: Southern Agriculture 1860-1980* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009); Pete Daniel, *Breaking the Land: The Transformation of Cotton, Tobacco, and Rice Cultures Since 1880* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); for information pertaining to the later years during the 20th century, see Jack Temple Kirby, *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986).

[15] Hurt, American Agriculture, 169.

desired. While this hurt all sharecroppers, the inability to escape the system—being tied to the landowner—was especially hard for those who had just fought for their freedom.

As much as the system of sharecropping and tenant farming would come to characterize southern agriculture in the late nineteenth century through mid-twentieth century, the system was not regionally specific; rather, it would also spread into other states, and, at least initially, seemed a way for other economically and socially marginalized groups to move up the agricultural economic ladder.



"Unloading dry farm wheat," Washington, 1925 *(George W. Ackerman, NARA, Records of the Extension Service [33-SC-5094c])*

The West

The type of American agriculture that developed on the West Coast, particularly in California, began as large-scale commercial agribusinesses, rather than as small, family-owned farms. The farmers that pushed into western states, beginning in the 1870s, almost immediately specialized in single-crop agriculture rather than in subsistence farming. Thus, they were tied to commercial markets from the outset, and their reliance on selling their produce as a commodity in the market economy only increased as the nineteenth century segued into the twentieth century. Two developments made this agricultural expansion possible: access to water and new technology in transportation. Although much of southern half of California has an arid climate, the diversion of water from nearby rivers and lakes made large-scale agriculture possible. Irrigation in California developed rapidly in the 1870s. During this decade, private canal-digging companies facilitated the irrigation of almost 2,930,000 acres, thus beginning what would become a long history of water rights disputes in the state. Even though irrigation helped farmers grow more crops, they still needed a way to get their goods to markets both near and far—a situation that was difficult for farmers of perishable goods. The answer to this need came with the development of

refrigerated train cars. Farmers in the Central, Imperial, and Coachella Valleys were now able to grow fruit and vegetables on a large scale and use refrigerated cars to ship their products to expanding markets in eastern states as well as in Latin America.[16]

Although California farmers became known for producing massive quantities of fruit and vegetables, as well as cotton, the first crop for which the region became known was wheat. Following on the heels of the gold rush in the early 1850s, wheat "bonanza farms" grew to such an extent that, by 1889, California had become the second largest wheat-growing state in the country. What the owners of these bonanza wheat farms needed, besides access to water and land, was a large labor supply. Men lured to the state during the gold rush were deemed too lazy to do the work; White agricultural migrants from the east did not want to work as farm laborers because they sought to become landowners themselves. Similarly, European immigrants who had left the peasantry systems of their home countries also wanted to become landowners rather than farm workers. During the 1850s, some large-scale farmers flirted with the idea of slavery in light of the labor shortage. However, when the 13th Amendment rendered that option moot, they soon turned their attention to the growing population of immigrants from China.[17]

After the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, the Chinese men who had labored in railroad construction needed new work. White landowners viewed Chinese immigrants as both hard working and reliable. Furthermore, they were cheap—not only because of the low wages that landowners paid them, but also because they only worked seasonally (and thus only had to be paid seasonally). By 1882, Chinese workers constituted 75 percent of the specialty-crop labor force and 50 percent of the overall agricultural workforce in the state. Prior to 1880, Chinese immigrants were able to work their way into farm tenancy. Yet, eventually, many became restricted from even renting land because of strong anti-Chinese prejudice, which turned the Chinese into almost exclusively agricultural laborers. Farmers had become so dependent on Chinese labor that they measured all other workers against the Chinese. They valued Chinese workers primarily because social, cultural, political, and economic forces in the United States had, in many ways, rendered Chinese immigrants "economically and occupationally powerless," according to historian Cletus Daniel. When these immigrants became the dominant labor force in the fields, even though they were doing work that White Americans refused to do, Whites still pushed for exclusion laws to end Chinese immigration to California and the United States in general. Growers responded by hiring more White workers to avoid exacerbating the anti-Chinese sentiments pervading the region. This action, however, did not stem the surge of resentment, which culminated in the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.[18]

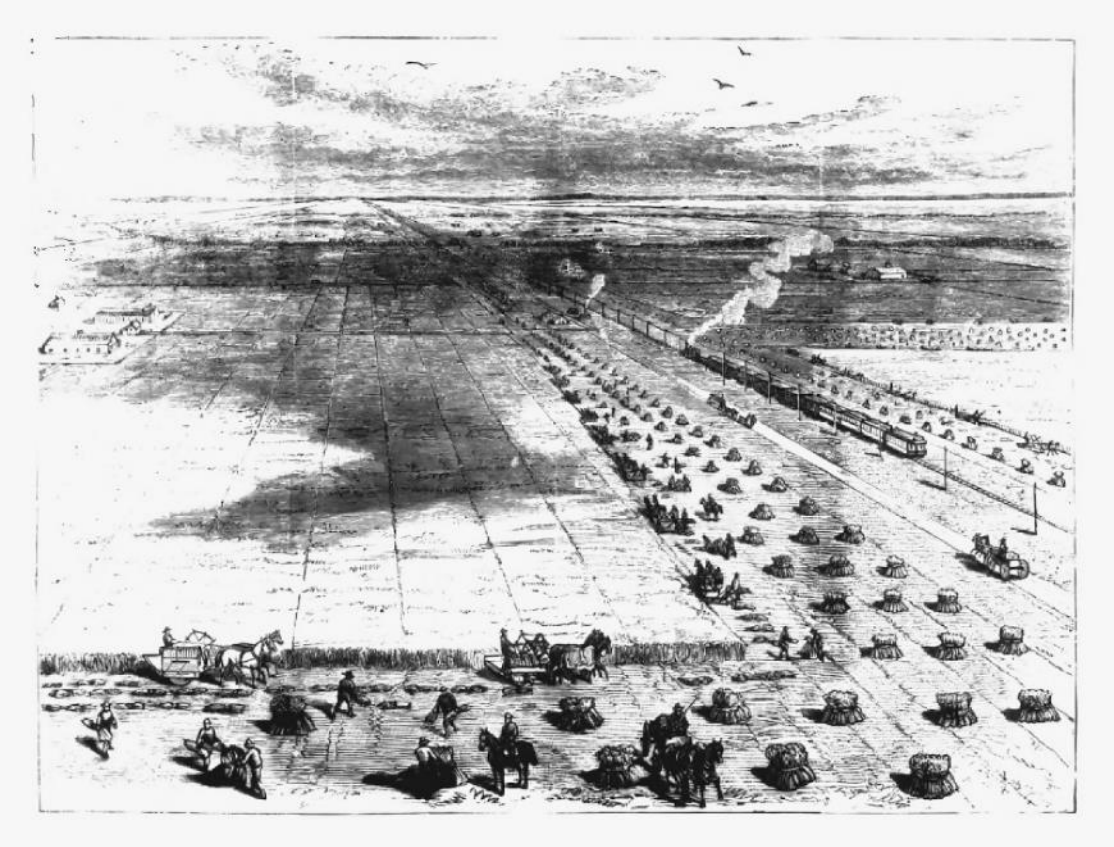
As seen in the treatment of Chinese immigrant farm workers, large-scale commercial farming not only shaped the California economy, but also had profound consequences on the state's social landscape. As land became increasingly consolidated in the hands of a few growers, small independent farmers could not compete. Unlike small farms where farm workers labored (and

[16] Ibid, 165, 185-86.

[17] Cletus E. Daniel, *Bitter Harvest: A History of California Farmworkers, 1870-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 27.

[18] Daniel, *Bitter Harvest*, 66-67; Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 210. See also Sucheng Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Lloyd Fisher, *The Harvest Labor Market in California* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953); Ping Chiu, *Chinese Labor in California, 1850-1880* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1967).

sometimes even ate) beside farm owners, agribusiness farming offered no such intimacy. The lack of shared space between farm owners and farm workers created clearly definable caste and class lines. The kind of farming that came to dominate the California landscape was, therefore, much more akin to the massive cotton and rice plantations of the antebellum era in the South than to the network of independent farms that characterized agriculture in the Northeast. "This," Daniel writes, "was the kind of agriculture that drew plain and ineradicable economic battle lines between farm employer and hired laborer"; and this was the kind of system that dominated the agricultural sector in California in the late nineteenth century.[19]



"Red River Bonanza Farm," from Independent Farmer & Fireside Companion, November 1, 1879
(National Register of Historic Places collection)

The farms that grew throughout the state essentially were, in the words of journalist Cary McWilliams, "factories in the fields" that embraced the commercial ethos of modern industrial America. Besides operating like big industries, the owners of these farms came to view themselves as businessmen in an effort to assimilate into the economic mainstream. Essentially, they too wanted to be among the emerging industrialist leaders that were increasingly dominating the social, political, and economic systems of the United States. In their identification with the new industrial ethic, these growers were swept up in many of the ideas that dominated industrial production during this era. For instance, California farmers were not immune to the craze for control over production exemplified by horizontal integration. To help facilitate this, farmers started organizing along crop lines—the first successful venture of this

[19] Daniel, *Bitter Harvest*, 17.

kind being the Southern California Fruit Exchange (1893). By 1920, almost every kind of grower had its own exchange.[20] As the nineteenth century transitioned to the twentieth century, this type of consolidation, organization, and efficiency in agriculture would spread far beyond the California border and into almost every region that engaged in large-scale agribusiness.



"The farmers' movement in the West. - meeting of the grangers in the woods near Winchester, Scott County, Illinois," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, August 30, 1873 *(LOC P&P)*

Farmers' Organizations

When the California growers began to organize in the 1890s, they did so largely in the pursuit of greater economic gain. Yet, the organization of farmers has a longer, and more complex, history in the United States. Among the many social trends that characterized American life in the late nineteenth century, one was the rise of social organizations. Secret societies that loosely followed the Masonic model began to take root throughout the country, as did ethnic societies, patriotic organizations, and genealogic associations.[21] Organizations such as these provided members with a community united by shared experiences. Farmers also participated in the surge of social organization of the post-Civil War era. Perhaps the first most significant of these was the Patrons of Husbandry.

In 1867, Oliver Hudson Kelley first formed The Patrons of Husbandry, or the Grange, to provide social and educational opportunities for farmers who lived in scattered homesteads across rural regions. Although it did not originally intend to do so, the Grange also became the first form of collective organization among farmers to advocate for social, political, and, especially, economic

[20] Ibid, 41-43.
[21] See Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, 138-139 n8.

reform. Kelley was a farmer who maintained a homestead near present-day Elk River in Minnesota (Oliver H. Kelley Farm, NHL, 1964) and also served as a clerk for the U.S. Bureau of Agriculture. One of his assignments included touring the agricultural region of the South to determine the extent of damage from the war. This experience led him to conclude that the situation was dire enough to require immediate action, but that government bureaucracy could not provide farmers with what they needed. He also believed that regional separation had prevented northern farmers from understanding southern farmers (and vice versa) and that much of the farmers' problems resulted from limited social and educational opportunities for farming families. He therefore devised a plan to start a secret agricultural organization based on the Masonic Lodge model. While the organization would be national, the local chapters would respond to the particular needs of their constituencies.[22]

With the help of six other founding members, Kelley formed the first National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry on December 4, 1867, and shortly thereafter established a subordinate Grange, Potomac No. 1, as a model for local chapters. While Kelley envisioned the Grange as a place for social gatherings where farmers could also learn about new agricultural techniques, the farmers in the Midwest, Great Plains, and South who formed and joined these locals sought an organization that would provide them with political power and protect their economic interests. To take care of the latter, state Granges formed "cooperative business ventures" such as cooperative stores that would help members save money on farming and household necessities by avoiding the high prices of retail stores. Granges also provided farmers with a means of eliminating middlemen in marketing their products because members used these groups as cooperative markets. Although a lack of business experience caused most of these ventures to fail, they did provide farmers with an opportunity to coalesce around particular grievances and generate solutions for them. Soon, Grange members began to push for larger political reforms, such as the regulation of railroad rates, in state legislatures. They even broadened to national issues and called for the direct election of senators, female suffrage, free coinage of silver, government control of railroads, free rural mail delivery, lengthening of the school year, and even free textbooks for students. They also advocated for greater adult education in the form of state-funded farmers' institutes.[23]

Even though it was patterned on a secret fraternal order, the Grange was known for its inclusivity, at least according to nineteenth century standards. Women were included in its ranks, rather than organized in separate auxiliaries, from the start of the organization. Some even put Kelley's niece and fellow "collaborator," Caroline Hall, on par with Kelley and the other six recognized founders. Although the Grange was inclusive enough to include city-dwellers in their agrarian group, their ethnic makeup was rather homogenous, as Anglo-Americans primarily filled the local chapters. Some locals tried to recruit other ethnic groups like Scandinavians in California and Germans in Pennsylvania, but they were not as open to Catholics or immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. This mistrust, however, was mutual—many Germans, and

[22] During the organization's heyday, local communities across the country constructed Grange Halls, many of which still exist. While not all of these are nationally significant, they played an important role in local and regional history and should be considered for potential listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

[23] The Grange peaked in 1875 and declined shortly thereafter due to a lack of sustained interest. Many members, however, would channel Grange ideas into the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party. Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 210. See also Sven D. Nordin, *Rich Harvest: A History of the Grange, 1867-1900* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1974).

Catholics especially, were wary of secret organizations (a papal condemnation of such groups in 1894 settled the question for many practicing Catholics). Lutherans and even some evangelical Christians had similar attitudes towards secret societies, which precluded them from joining as well.[24]

Farmers' organizations like the Grange were particularly important in helping members through difficult times and for fostering a sense of solidarity that would unite them in efforts to improve their conditions. Like the rest of America, farmers were hit hard by the recession of 1873. In the South, farmers were still recovering from the war and suffered from new setbacks such as droughts and the newly implemented crop lien system. Poor rains affected farmers in the Plains as well, as did other conditions peculiar to farming. Swarms of grasshoppers from 1876 to 1877 devastated the wheat-growing communities in Minnesota, resulting in a rash of farm foreclosures and abandonment.[25] Furthermore, farmers were hit hard by high, and seemingly arbitrary, rail freight costs. Since growers were almost entirely connected to the market economy by this point, railroads provided the necessary linkage for farmers who lived long distances from the urban markets that they supplied. By the closing decades of the century, conditions were ripe for an uprising, and soon farmers joined industrial and extractive laborers in demanding economic and political reform.

The agrarian revolt that would crisscross the South and old Northwest actually began in upstate New York among farmers who, in 1877, believed that the railroads that connected the East to the Midwest were discriminating against them. In March of that year, F. P. Root, a Rochester farmer and leader of the local Grange chapter, gathered wheat farmers and cattlemen to create a new organization designed to unite the various agricultural associations into one single political entity to lobby on behalf of their interests: a Farmers' Alliance. Even though the group was to be political, it was also strictly nonpartisan—it focused exclusively on the needs of farmers rather than maintaining a broad political outlook. The Alliance did not last long, as members left to join other political parties and associations of the era, including the Greenback Party and the Antimonopoly League. Yet, while the association itself may have died, the idea of it lived on and took root in the Midwest.[26]

Near the same time that farmers organized in New York, farmers were beginning to unite in Texas. Another short-lived organization calling itself the Farmers' Alliance formed in Lampasas County, Texas, in September 1877, when local cattlemen and farmers gathered at the farm of John R. Allen to form a secret order to fight cattle rustling. This Alliance soon dissolved as well, but members regrouped and formed a new secret society, the Knights of Reliance, to provide social activity and support the Greenback party in 1878. After the Knights suffered the same fate as the Alliance before it, members again reorganized two years later to form the Farmers' State Alliance, which eventually grew and spread into what would become known as the Southern Alliance, to promote "interregional agricultural cooperation." The Southern Alliance, like the Grange, focused on alleviating economic problems that farmers in the region faced. Although economics came first, the Alliance also advocated political education for their members so that

[24] Donald B. Marti, *Women of the Grange: Mutuality and Sisterhood in Rural America*, 1866-1920 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 3, 5-6.
[25] Linebaugh, "Excavating the Dugout House of Norwegian Immigrant Anna Byberg Christopherson Goulson," 65.
[26] Robert C. McMath, *American Populism: A Social History* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 4-5.

they could push politicians to support their causes. During the 1880s, Southern Alliance members specifically used their chapters to circumvent (and hopefully end) the furnishing system of sharecropping by using the Alliance as a means through which members could market their cotton crop. In the South, the Alliance became a social organization that was open to all agricultural workers—whether they owned land or not—as well as white-collar workers that served rural communities; but it remained a White-only institution. The entrenched social and economic hierarchy of the South did affect membership rolls, however, as wealthy planters had no reason to join and impoverished tenants often did not have the means to pay the required dues to join. Women could become members, but few had leadership positions. In 1888, a Colored Farmers' National Alliance formed in Houston County, Texas, but remained separate from its counterpart in the white Southern Alliance until 1890.[27]

In 1888, the Southern Alliance moved into the wheat areas of the Plains, but ran into competition with the National Farmers' Alliance, a northern group that had formed in Chicago in 1880 to fight monopolies. However, the Southern Alliance's cooperatives and nonpartisan political stance attracted many new converts who defected from their regional organization.[28] That same year, Southern Alliance members joined with another southern agricultural group called the Agricultural Wheel.

The Wheel had formed in Prairie County, Arkansas in early 1882. On the night of February 15, a group of seven farmers met in a small schoolhouse near Des Arc and established the Wattensas Farmers' Club. After four meetings, this group renamed itself the Agricultural Wheel, and within one year their membership rolls exploded to over five hundred. By 1885 they counted over 10,000 members in branches stretching across Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. Even as their numbers grew, the Wheel remained somewhat exclusive, at least when compared to other agricultural organizations. They chose to focus on recruiting small farmers, mechanics, and agricultural laborers. Yet, at the same time, they epitomized the nineteenth-century notion of producerism by reaching out to include industrial workers and forming an alliance with the Knights of Labor. In so doing, the Wheel worked to unite "the laboring classes, the real producers of wealth."[29]

This focus on organizing farmers and workers of a particular economic status enabled the group to generate reforms and initiatives that spoke to the specific needs of this constituency. Like the Grange and other farmers' organizations of the era, the Agricultural Wheel sought to financially

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[27] Hurt, American Agriculture, 206-210.

[28] The Northern and Southern Alliances failed to join forces because the members could not agree on the same issues. For instance, the Northern Alliance wanted to include African Americans and opposed using cottonseed oil to create the butter substitute, oleomargarine, which southern cotton farmers had supported.

[29] Theodore Saloutos, "The Agricultural Wheel in Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (June 1943): 130-133. Producerism is the concept that labor creates value—that the people who make things are the source of the nation's wealth. According to Robert McMath, producerism constituted the Alliance's "class appeal," but this was "not the class consciousness of the proletariat, but the shared experience of producers" (McMath, *American Populism*, 73). Perhaps the best description of this sentiment among farmers comes from the popular Populist anthem "The Farmer is the Man," which includes the lyrics:

> The farmer is the man / Lives on credit till the fall / With the interest rate so high, / It's a wonder he don't die; / The banker is the man who gets it all. / When the banker says he's broke, / And the merchant's up in smoke, / The farmer is the man who feeds them all. / It would put them to the test / If the farmer took a rest. / The farmer is the man who feeds them all…

aid members through business ventures and programs. In order to assert more control over farmers' purchasing and selling ability, the Wheel established its first cooperative stores in 1884, an example of which still stands in the town of Batesville, Arkansas. By 1887, the Wheel had also established business exchanges, tobacco warehouses, and other local initiatives to aid struggling farmers. The following year, they merged with the Southern Alliance, thus uniting the two key farmers' organizations in the region.[30]

The expanded Farmers' Alliance became acutely political in 1890 when, at their annual convention in Ocala, Florida, they issued a platform calling for a series of political reforms, many of which were reminiscent of the Grange's demands. In 1892, Alliance members of the Great Plains organized to form a third political party, the People's Party, based on the Ocala platform. With the formation of the People's Party, the Alliance movement died. People's Party advocates sought to use political means to achieve economic reform, and they turned to the Federal Government for assistance, a move that would come to characterize much of agrarian political action in the following century.[31]

The People's Party represented the culmination of the agrarian revolt of the nineteenth century, referred to as the Populist Movement. The Farmers' Alliances, Granges, and other agricultural organizations tapped into sentiments that pervaded political discourse in the late nineteenth century. Like their industrial counterparts in the Knights of Labor, Populists were united by shared beliefs in anti-monopolism, producerism, and radical republicanism.[32] They wanted a cooperative commonwealth of producers; they pushed for public regulation of production and exchange; and they sought to restore profits to the producers during bad market and low price periods. Ultimately, writes historian Robert McMath, "The Farmers' Alliance recruited millions of rural Americans into an organization where they developed a new sense of their own capability and a new political culture that led them to form the People's (Populist) Party."[33]

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[30] Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment*, 107-08; Anon. "Wheel store, Batesville, Independence County," Arkansas Historic Preservation Program website, http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/historicproperties/_search_nomination_popup.aspx?id=1540, accessed August 7, 2014.

[31] Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 210. See also Robert C. McMath, Populist Vanguard: A History of The Southern Farmers' Alliance (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975); Lawrence Goodwyn, The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). Ignatius Donnelly, a labor radical, unveiled the People's Party platform at the first convention in Omaha, Nebraska. Many of the proposed reforms emphasized greater government regulation to check the power of moneyed interests, specifically through government control of transportation and communication (railroads and telegraphs). Populists also sought to enhance farmers' financial power through a "subtreasury" plan in which the government would provide warehouses for farmers to store their crops until prices rose. They also proposed political and economic reforms through demands for the direct election of senators, a progressive income tax, free coinage of silver (they opposed the gold standard), and paper currency. For more information see "The People's Party: Omaha Platform" in The Radical Reader: A Documentary History of the American Radical Tradition, Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John McMillian, eds. (New York: The New Press, 2003), 250-252.

[32] McMath, *American Populism*, 7

[33] Ibid 15. The People's Party platform included demands for a stronger federal government to check the power of moneyed interests, more currency (many members were former Greenbackers), and for the government to reclaim land from corporations. It also called for government ownership of railroads and telegraphs. Some southern Populists also demanded an end to the convict lease system, denounced lynch law, and called for the protection of

In many ways, Populists were radicals who challenged the social and political culture of their era. Southern Populists, at least initially, attempted to subvert the political stranglehold that the Democratic Party held on the region. Although individual populists maintained ambiguous racial views at best, they did promote a platform that sought to aid struggling African American farmers during a period when racial violence and Jim Crow laws were becoming the norm throughout the region. Populism also enabled women to become political actors and demonstrate in a new way the vital contributions they made to the family farm economy. In Kansas, Mary K. Lease became known as one of the most vociferous Populist organizers. Born in Pennsylvania, she moved to Kansas where she taught school, raised four children, worked as a farm wife, and, in 1885, gained admittance to the Kansas bar after studying law at home. As a Populist lecturer, she traveled the South and Midwest urging farmers to join the cause. Although she denied actually making this statement, Lease became well known for the exhortation, "We need to raise less corn and more hell."[34] Indeed, that was just what the Populists aimed to do through political, economic, and social reform.[35]

Populism as a movement, however, was rather short-lived and ended with the close of the nineteenth century. The People's Party suffered defeats in the 1892 election and Populists fused with the Democratic Party in 1896. Despite their candidate William Jennings Bryan's indefatigable campaigning and widespread fame for rallying cries of his own, he ultimately lost to William McKinley.[36] Although historians differ on how radical Populism actually was, Populists clearly fit in with a type of working-class radicalism that coursed through the last three decades of the nineteenth century. The People's Party even adopted many of the demands that labor groups such as the Knights of Labor had advocated (e.g. the eight-hour workday). In many ways, farmers identified with industrial workers because they were all *laborers* who produced the products that undergirded the nation's wealth. Yet, when the Populist movement ended, farmers' identification as laborers largely ended with it. By the twentieth century, landowning farmers began viewing themselves less as producing laborers, but now as independent farmers, or even employers or managers.[37]

During the early years of the twentieth century, business leaders began to court farmers precisely at the same time that farmers began to approach their work in a more business-like manner. Soon, the agribusiness approach common in California spread to other agricultural centers of the

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African Americans' political rights. See also Peter H. Argersinger, *Populism and Politics: William Alfred Peffer and The People's Party* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974).

[34] Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 210.

[35] Historians have also noted the darker side of Populism. In the South, many white Populists maintained contradictory attitudes towards African Americans—welcoming them into the movement and advocating for measures to protect African Americans' economic interests on the one hand, and still adhering to notions of white supremacy on the other. After the movement, some abandoned their support for African American farmers in the region altogether. Perhaps this switch was most apparent in the political trajectory of former Populist organizer Thomas Watson; see C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938). Other historians like Richard Hofstadter in *The Age of Reform* have noted strains of anti-Semitism and nativism in the movement. See also Robert C. McMath, *Populist Vanguard*.

[36] Bryan's most popular quote came from his speech at the 1896 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The speech itself is one of the most famous in American political history; the line that Bryan is perhaps best known for is his conclusion: "[Y]ou shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

[37] Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, 122.

United States. Agricultural associations of the early twentieth century reflected this change. Rather than calling for sweeping reforms like the Grangers and Alliance members had done, leaders of this new generation focused more on encouraging landowning farmers to "act like captains of industry," through economic and labor manipulation. As farmers emulated industrial employers, they widened a divide that was growing in the world of agricultural work. Increasingly, farm owners and tenant, migrant, and seasonal workers would be on opposing sides of this divide—their differences often visibly demarcated by race, ethnicity, and class.[38]

A New Century

In 1893 the historian Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his famous lecture, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" at the World's Fair Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In this essay about the significance of the frontier in shaping American development, Turner grappled with the fact that the frontier, at least according to the U.S. Census Bureau, no longer existed.[39] As some intellectuals bemoaned the closing of this chapter in American history and others speculated on the effect that this would have on national identity, the era of the "frontier," or at least of homesteading on land taken from Native Americans, had not entirely ended. In fact, shortly after the turn of the century, the government opened up the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota for settlement by White citizens. Applicants (there were approximately 106,000) had to sign up for a lottery and, unlike with the 1862 Homestead Act, had to pay for their land. The cost could reach as high as four dollars an acre, but settlers could pay that over the span of five years. The government continued to open tracts for farmers in Western South Dakota until 1915. While farming families produced products for their own consumption, their lives were largely dominated by their engagement in a system of cash-crop monoculture dictated by the market economy; in many ways, they were bound even more closely to "creditors, processors, foreign buyers, and international exchange rates" than their Populist forebears.[40]

The Populist movement may have ended, but the problems that farmers faced in their dependence on the market economy had not. Some of the reforms that Populists had demanded (e.g. the direct election of senators and a graduated income tax) were taken up by a new group of reformers: the Progressives. Although Progressive reformers were especially known for directing their efforts towards alleviating problems in urban areas, some activists also turned their attention to the country. In 1907 Theodore Roosevelt, the first Progressive president, initiated the Commission on Country Life (CCL) to examine rural American life, focusing on the lives of farmers.[41] The Commission was then charged with designing programs to improve the lives of

[38] Ibid, 122-127.

[39] In 1890, Census Bureau officials observed the absence of a connecting frontier line, which, to many, signified the end of the American frontier. For a concise discussion of the cultural and intellectual significance of Turner's "Frontier Thesis," see Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 13-17.

[40] Douglas R. Hurt, Problems of Plenty: the American Farmer in the Twentieth Century (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), 4-5.

[41] The category of "rural" did not apply exclusively to farmers and farming communities. "Rural" has more to do with population density, such that some small industrial communities like mill and mining towns have qualified as rural because of their low population numbers. The U.S. Census does not have a definition of "rural," but defines "urban" to include areas with populations of over 2,500. Communities with populations lower than that number are therefore considered to be rural by default. For further information on government definitions of "rural" and

farmers and their families. The findings of the study, which the Commission released in 1909, concluded that farmers were often victimized by special interests (industry, financial institutions, and railroads) because they were disunited. The CCL encouraged farmers to organize in order to push for reforms that would advance their interests. It also called for government involvement through improving rural schools, highway construction to enhance transportation and lessen rural isolation, parcel post delivery, and low-interest credit for farmers. Furthermore, the CCL suggested "an extension service through the land-grant colleges, which would apply agricultural research to daily farm needs; crop diversification; the establishment of cooperatives; and government regulation of monopolies," according to historian Douglas Hurt. All of these recommendations were reminiscent of the kinds of demands that the Grange, the Farmers' Alliances, and the People's Party had issued in the nineteenth century.[42]

The notion that land-grant colleges could improve farmers' lives had been circulating since the mid-nineteenth century. Land-grant colleges began in 1862 when Congress passed the Morrill Land-Grant College Act to create state colleges that would, with federal support, teach agricultural and mechanical education. (Southerners had opposed the idea when congressman Justin S. Morrill from Vermont first introduced the bill in the House in 1857, fearing that it would enhance federal power over state governments.) A network of experiment stations that taught farmers applied techniques developed alongside these institutions. These stations were designed to reach out to farmers who were not inclined to learn about techniques in a formal educational setting. Recognizing that the Act had failed to account for African Americans in rural regions—a majority of whom were still enslaved in 1862—Congress passed a second Morrill Act in 1890 that forbade states from practicing racial discrimination at land-grant colleges, but allowed states to erect separate facilities for students, provided that they applied federal funds equally to the racially-segregated institutions. However, despite the intentions of the bill, most of the African American land-grant colleges were severely underfunded well into the twentieth century.[43]

"urban" see the US Department of Health and Human Services website, http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/policy/definition_of_rural.html.

[42] Hurt, *Problems of Plenty*, 15-16. Roosevelt continued his call for improving the lives of farmers throughout his presidency. During a speech at the John Brown Memorial Park in Osawatomie, Kansas, on August 31, 1910, in which he unveiled his theory of government regulation called "New Nationalism," Roosevelt echoed the findings of the CCL and recognized that improvements in farming had to benefit *all* members of farming families. Roosevelt explained, "And now a special word to the farmer. I want to see him make the farm as fine as it can be made; and let him remember to see that the improvement goes on indoors as well as out; let him remember that the farmer's wife should have her share of thought and attention just as much as the farmer himself." Theodore Roosevelt, "New Nationalism Speech," (August 31, 1910) in *American Progressivism: A Reader*, eds. Ronald J. Pestritto and William J. Atto (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008).

[43] Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 192-94.



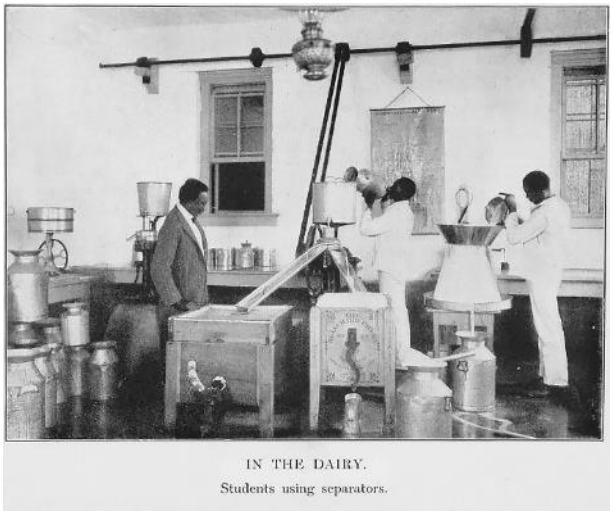

(L) ***Senator Justin Smith Morrill House, Strafford, VT, 1959*** *(Aubrey P. Janion, LOC P&P, HABS VT-35)*
(R) ***Animal Husbandry Class, Iowa State College. Ames, IA, 1942*** *(Jack Delano, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI).*

When the government failed to provide adequate financial support for land-grant colleges for African American students, some communities took it upon themselves to finance, build, and privately run their own institutions. A key example of this effort was the creation of Tuskegee Institute (Tuskegee Institute, NHL, 1965). The school began when a small African American community outside of Tuskegee, Alabama, sought to construct a school for their children. Johanna Bowen Redgry, an African American former slave, and her husband, Lewis Redgry, a Native American, owned the church and a fifty-five acre farm that would become the site of the first school. In the summer of 1881, Booker T. Washington arrived in the town to teach classes on the Redgry Farm. With money provided through local fundraising efforts as well as by White, northern philanthropists, the school blossomed under the leadership of Washington and Olivia Davidson, two of the original teachers.

Tuskegee Institute provided academic and industrial training for both men and women. Educators designed the curriculum to teach students and prepare them for occupations that fell largely along gender lines.[44] Students cleared land for planting cotton and fired bricks to construct buildings for the school or to sell to local townspeople—all the proceeds went towards expanding the school. In 1886, George Washington Carver became the director of the agricultural department, bringing his expertise in botany and soil enrichment to the Institute. Through his efforts, Tuskegee's experimental farm became a model for demonstrating high-yield crops. In addition to advancing agricultural education through the institute itself, Carver took his methods on the road by developing a "movable school" in 1889. Traveling in a wagon stocked with machinery and technical exhibits, Carver taught his techniques to regional farmers who did not have the means to come and learn them at the school.[45]

[44] Although women were primarily trained in domestic service (as wage-earners and to take care of their own households), they also learned agricultural methods. Margaret Murray Washington, a teacher and Booker T. Washington's first wife, recognized that traditional "women's" work on farms was an important contribution to the household economy and strongly advocated agricultural training for female students.

[45] Barbara Bair, "Though Justice Sleeps," in *To Make Our World Anew: A History of African Americans*, Robin D. G. Kelley and Earl Lewis, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 310-317. For further information on Tuskegee Institute see Booker T. Washington, *Working with the Hands: Being a Sequel to Up from Slavery Covering the Author's Experiences with Industrial Training at Tuskegee*, (Salem, N.H.: Ayer, 1970 reprint).



IN THE DAIRY.
Students using separators.



FIG. 8.—Negro movable school which carries equipment and instructors to local communities where the better ways of farming and home making are demonstrated. Such movable schools have supplemented the work of the local negro extension agent, who follows up and impresses on the community the lessons brought out

(L) ***Tuskegee Students using cream separators in model dairy,*** ***Tuskegee and Its People*** *(NY: Appleton 1906) (NYPL Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division)*
(R) ***Booker T. Washington Agricultural School on Wheels,*** ***A Decade of Negro Extension Work*** *(Washington: GPO 1926) (NYPL, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division)*

Besides severely underserving African American farmers publicly funded land-grant colleges often had a difficult time recruiting White students. These colleges specialized in offering courses that introduced farmers to new techniques; they also offered classes to farmers' wives on nutrition and hygiene. However, many of these classes failed to attract the attention of young farmers, and the older farmers who did attend tended to use them as social gatherings rather than as a source for useful new information. Recognizing that they had to devise new ways to reach farmers, the United States Department of Agriculture began a program to provide agricultural education through practical demonstrations in 1903. This program focused on displaying techniques through demonstration farms with the intention of teaching by example. Seamen A. Knapp, a farmer and professor of agriculture at Iowa State College, initiated the program. Under his direction, the USDA funded five demonstration farms across the South based on a model Knapp had developed working with rice farmers along the Gulf Coast in the mid-1880s. Believing that an approach emphasizing applied learning would reach farmers more effectively than lectures, the program began with one farmer who agreed to practice USDA techniques. The hope was that this would create a ripple effect, with nearby farmers seeing the improvements and then implementing them on their own farms.

Knapp established the first demonstration farm in Terrell County, Texas, at the Porter Farm (Porter Farm, NHL, 1964). The program ended a successful first year when the farmer who had volunteered to test the new agricultural techniques earned $700 more from his crops than he had the year before. Knapp then expanded his program with money provided by Congress to combat the dreaded boll weevil, which had been wreaking havoc on cotton crops for years. With hired demonstration workers called "county agents," he established a network of demonstration farms to illustrate the benefits of crop diversification and rotation, as well as better seeds, livestock, and cultivation. Together, these efforts became known as the Farmers' Cooperative Demonstration Work (FCDW). These farms targeted both White and Black farmers; in 1906 the FCDW established two African American demonstration farms and began working with African

American land-grant colleges in Alabama and Virginia to provide agricultural classes. The program grew to such an extent that by 1910 there were Black and White county agents in every southern state. Of the 859 agents in the field by 1914, women constituted a quarter, teaching farm women about household management and creating farm women's markets where they would sell their produce.[46]

Even without Federal prodding, farmers continued to form their own cooperatives and exchanges to serve their educational, social, political, and economic interests. Although farmers had been organizing into economic self-interest groups since the late nineteenth century, these kinds of associations became far more ubiquitous during the early twentieth century. One exchange that became particularly powerful after mandating that all members sell their products through the exchange or be subject to a fine was the California Fruit Growers' Exchange (later known as Sunkist), organized in 1905.

Rather than being national in scope, cooperatives operated on local and regional levels, focusing on the specific needs of the members. For instance, in New England dairy farmers began organizing into cooperatives to secure their economic as well as political interests. In Vermont, this effort largely began in 1869 with the Vermont Dairyman's Association. Soon, the cooperative movement spread throughout the region, beginning with the Milk Producers' Union in Boston in 1886. Perhaps the most notable cooperative in the region was the New England Milk Producers' Association (NEMPA), which formed in 1917. Like other cooperatives acting on behalf of their members' economic interests, NEMPA negotiated prices, pushed for fair transportation rates in the Boston market, and attempted to secure quality control for their dairy products. By 1922, NEMPA counted over 20,000 members throughout New England.[47] Wheat farmers in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Dakotas formed the American Society of Equity in 1902 in Indianapolis and encouraged members to withhold selling their products until prices reached the levels that the Society deemed fair. Members also began the Equity Cooperative Exchange at the terminal market in Minneapolis.[48]

In 1902, former Farmer's Alliance member Isaac Newton Gresham organized the Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America (Farmers Union) in Point, Texas. This organization became particularly strong in the South and Midwest, and many of the leaders had been active Populists and Farmers' Alliance members. The national organization reflected this background, most notably in its membership, which was open to farmers, agricultural workers, and rural professionals (teachers, ministers, doctors, editors). They were not fully inclusive, however, for they denied membership to African Americans. Furthermore, like the People's Party before them, they stipulated that anyone deemed parasitic (bankers, lawyers, merchants, speculators) could not join. They also reached out to their industrial compatriots in calling for an end to child labor and for an eight-hour workday.[49]

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[46] Hurt, Problems of Plenty, 30-31.

[47] Woodsmoke Productions and Vermont Historical Society, "The Co-op Movement," Green Mountain Chronicles radio broadcast, original broadcast 1988-89, https://vermonthistory.org/the-coop-movement-1919. Vermont even had its share of radical farmers, who organized the Vermont Farm Bureau, an anti-business group, in 1918.

[48] For further information on The American Society of Equity, see Robert H. Bahmer, "The American Society of Equity," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (January 1940), 33-63.

[49] Hurt, Problems of Plenty, 20-21.

While these demands were reminiscent of the nineteenth century, they also illustrated the new wave of reform efforts initiated during the Progressive era. Farmers reflected modern trends not only in their reform initiatives, but also in the way that they redesigned agricultural work. New concepts of streamlining labor processes coursed through the industrial sector, exemplified by the rise of Taylorism and the demand for efficiency experts. Furthermore, industries had been consolidating into large corporations since the previous century—a situation that greatly enhanced the power of a few industrialists at the expense of smaller businesses and workers. Agriculture was not immune to these trends of increasing efficiency and consolidation, and nowhere was this more evident than in the rise of corporate farms, particularly in Texas.

Corporate ranches emerged in the cotton region of southern Texas after the turn of the twentieth century. One of the initial ranches of this kind was the Taft Ranch, a 200,000-acre farm run by professional farm managers who oversaw the work of White, Black, and Mexican laborers. The Taft Ranch experimented in both scientific farming and maintaining a multi-racial labor force. Like the industrialists of the era, the farm managers were educated in the principles of scientific management and sought to control the living, eating, purchasing, schooling, and religious activities of the workers in pursuit of greater efficiency and higher production. Much like the company towns of extractive and manufacturing industries, corporate ranches had their own churches, stores, and schools that the corporation built and maintained. At times, they even paid workers in scrip that was only redeemable at company-owned facilities. Failure to use the company's stores and cotton gins often resulted in dismissal. Sometimes, though, workers would patronize other facilities, even if prices were higher, as a way to get out from under the thumb of Charles Phelps Taft, the owner of the ranch, whom many tenants viewed as a 'standing menace to their liberty.'[50]

Corporate ranching took off in this region because land was cheap. Prior to the arrival of corporations, cotton production had not taken root in the area, so these corporations bought vast amounts of land in order to introduce both cotton farming and cattle ranching "along corporate lines."[51] Of course, the people who lost the most in this scenario were small, independent farmers who could not compete with the large landowners. At the time, many commentators believed that consolidating farming under central corporations increased efficiency in agriculture—putting it more on par with industrial production. Poor African Americans and Mexicans could be made more productive, these commentators argued, if they stopped living as separate sharecroppers and became wage laborers on industrial farms, working under the direction of those deemed "best equipped" to run the operation—meaning native-born, White managers. On corporate farms like the Taft Ranch, Whites worked as tenant farmers (using the exact seed, fertilizer, and methods that the company dictated) and Mexicans worked as wage laborers; African Americans were employed in both positions. The company constructed separate schools for the children of each group, as well as separate churches. Company-owned

[50] Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 124-125. Managers even "instructed" employees on how they should vote on the ranch that Charles Phelps Taft, the brother of President William Howard Taft, owned. The company was known for filling out ballots and handing them to Mexican workers who they rounded up to bring to the polls; the company paid the workers' poll taxes upfront and later deducted the cost from the workers' wages.

[51] Foley, *The White Scourge*, 118-128.

housing was also segregated by race as well as class; the ranch even established a hospital with segregated dormitories for African American and Mexican patients.

Corporate farms exemplified the application of Taylorism to agricultural production. According to Joseph Green, who ran the Taft Ranch from 1900 until his death in 1926, all of the social control that the corporation exerted on the workers was designed to maximize efficiency. In this case, greater efficiency would, the owners assumed, result in increased cotton production. Gradually, the company began to phase out tenancy, replacing the small sharecropping plots with large fields. These were operated almost exclusively by Mexican wage laborers, working under the supervision of foremen, some of whom were also of Mexican descent.[52]

The rise of corporate farms like the Taft Ranch could not have occurred had it not been for a restructuring of farm labor. Rather than a network of independent farms operated by farming families, corporate ranches in Texas, much like the bonanza wheat farms of California, relied on a large pool of seasonal workers. The answer to the growers' need came in the form of migrant workers, many of whom were Mexican, Asian American, African American, and Pacific Islander.



Mexican sugar beet worker's family near East Grand Forks, MN, 1937 *(Russell Lee, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

Migrant Labor

Many Mexicans began moving to Texas after the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 because wages in the cotton fields were comparatively higher than in Mexico. Mexicans soon

[52] Foley, *The White Scourge*, 131-32.

became the workers of choice in the cotton industry, and growers began employing them in greater numbers than Black and White laborers (a situation that pushed Black workers out of Texas cotton fields and into northern industrial cities during the early years of the Great Migration). Fearing that they would lose their jobs to Mexican workers, many White tenant farmers used race-baiting tactics such as accusing landowners of "betraying the whiteness of Texas" and petitioning the government to restrict the flow of Mexican migrants into the cotton fields.[53] Soon, racism, oppressive work conditions, and poor wages in Texas caused Mexican workers, like African Americans before them, to seek employment elsewhere.

Another region that became particularly reliant on migratory labor was California. By the turn of the century, California had become an agricultural center. Large-scale fruit and vegetable farms soon superseded the wheat farming that had dominated the state's agriculture during the previous century. Improvements in transportation, irrigation, and large landholding allowed farmers to specialize in certain crops. Small-scale farmers could not compete under these circumstances and often sold their land to wealthier growers, which only exacerbated the regional consolidation of land. As farms grew bigger, California farmers became increasingly dependent on the low-paid labor of a migratory workforce to harvest their crops.[54]

The next large group of immigrant workers that came to California after the exclusion of Chinese immigrants in 1882 was the Japanese. Between 1893 and 1910, approximately 80,000 Japanese immigrants entered the United States. Most settled in port cities along the West Coast and became laborers in the railroad, canning, logging, fishing, coal mining, smelting, meat packing, and salt-making industries. Japanese workers moved into agricultural labor in greater numbers following the end of Chinese immigration. Growers regarded this first generation of Japanese immigrants, known as Issei, as a good substitute for Chinese laborers because of their reputation for working hard and accepting lower wages than native-born White workers. Furthermore, because many of the recent immigrants came from farming regions in Japan, they were skilled agricultural workers. The Issei began as farm laborers and were an especially strong presence in fruit and vegetable agriculture. Like their counterparts in industrial work, Issei agricultural workers found employment through labor contractors. Those who gained the favor of White landowners were able to transition into tenancy, first becoming share then cash tenants; some even became landowners.[55]

[53] Ibid, 41.
[54] Hurt, Problems of Plenty, 9.
[55] Iwata Masakazu, Planted in Good Soil: A History Of The Issei In United States Agriculture (New York: P. Lang, 1992), 111-112.




(L) ***Workers Harvesting Oranges, Riverside County, CA; date and photographer unknown*** *(LOC P&P, HAER CA-118); (R)* ***Japanese Worker Housing, Arlington Heights Fruit Company, Riverside, CA; date and photographer unknown*** *(LOC P&P, HAER CA-118)*

One example of a Japanese immigrant who managed to work his way up the agricultural ladder was George Shima (Kinji Ushijima), nicknamed "The Potato King." Born in 1865, Shima arrived in the United States in 1889 and first worked as a domestic worker, as a laborer on a hop farm and then a potato farm, and as a woodcutter. He eventually became a sharecropper and planted his first potatoes in a peach orchard in New Hope, California. Although he struggled through his first few years as a potato grower, he hit financial success during the Spanish-American War when potato prices soared. At this time, he established a brand name for his potatoes—Shima Potatoes—and a slogan "Quantity with Quality," earning roughly $300,000 annually. Soon, Shima became known for harvesting the "most intensely cultivated potato crop in the world," according to historian Iwata Masakazu. Shima was also the first grower to grade potatoes, shipping only those that ranked the highest. Additionally, he served as the first president of the Japanese Association of America and often donated potatoes to the Salvation Army and other charities.[56]

Shima succeeded in what most Issei sought to achieve: owning land. To many of these immigrants, working as laborers was the first step towards attaining the goal of land ownership. This goal, however, required more money than the Japanese workers were earning. As a result, the Issei were not quite the docile labor force White growers had assumed. For instance, once the Japanese became a majority of the agricultural labor force, they then had leveraging power. Waiting until critical times in the crop cycle, they threatened to walk off the job unless farm owners made necessary changes to their contracts or raised their wages. Again, however, they did this not in the name of achieving a union or some other form of labor solidarity, but rather as a financial means to move them closer to land ownership.

Even if they could not own land outright, Japanese immigrants sought to at least become tenant farmers, oftentimes pooling together meager resources to purchase land. Some even started communities for other Japanese immigrants whose livelihoods were in agriculture. In 1902, Kyutaro Abiko founded the Yamato Colony outside the town of Livingston in Merced County, California. This was a large tract of land on which Japanese immigrants could settle as a

[56] Iwata Masakazu, *Planted in Good Soil*, 240-250.

community. It welcomed people with few economic resources, provided that they adhered to certain values (no drinking or gambling), and the residents had to want to stay there rather than to return to Japan. The leaders of this Christian venture emphasized thrift, healthy living, and hard work. Their influence reached beyond the boundaries of the Colony and had an overwhelmingly strong influence on Japanese immigrants living in California and other western states.[57]

California growers had sought out Issei workers because of their reputation as hard workers. Yet, because the Issei saved their money and purchased land, nativist groups targeted them much as such groups had persecuted the Chinese in the late nineteenth century. As the Issei grew more financially successful and were visibly moving up the rungs of the agricultural ladder, a new wave of anti-Asian prejudice arose in the state, leading to the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, which restricted Japanese immigration. Furthermore, the state soon passed a highly discriminatory alien land law preventing the Issei from owning land alone or in groups.[58] In the wake of strong anti-Asian sentiment, growers increasingly turned to Mexican migrants and immigrants after 1915. During WWI, Mexican workers dominated the agricultural labor force in the citrus groves and cotton fields of the San Joaquin and Imperial Valleys. As more Whites moved out of agricultural labor and into urban/industrial work, more Mexicans and Mexican Americans moved in; by 1930, Mexicans constituted 80 percent of the harvesting labor in the state. Moreover, Mexican migrants did not cause trouble with local nativists because they often left the area when the harvest was over rather than staying and attempting to purchase land of their own.[59]

Migrant Labor Militancy

The years between 1900 and 1920 were considered the golden age of agriculture in the West. Growing urban markets sparked a high demand for products—a demand that was only exacerbated during the war years. The value of farmland, particularly in the Plains states, also rose, further elevating farmers' economic status. Higher crop yields, technological and scientific advancements in agriculture, and greater productivity enabled farmers to buy labor-saving machines and partake in the domestic comforts of modern life. California, perhaps the first western state to embrace the modern industrial farm, exemplified this trend, as large landowners prospered well into the 1920s.

While corporate farms took off in Texas and large agribusinesses dominated in California, bonanza farms, particularly in the wheat industry, were the large-scale agricultural ventures in the Plains states. These were mechanized farms that relied on the labor of a highly supervised low wage workforce during harvesting and threshing seasons. Bonanza farms epitomized the "factories in the field" of western agribusinesses. An example of a factory-like bonanza wheat farm in North Dakota was the Cass-Cheney Farm, known locally as the Dalrymple Farm. When Northern Pacific Railroad investors attempted to recruit settlers to land that the company owned in North Dakota, they hired Oliver Dalrymple, a wheat expert, to manage the farm, which served as an early form of demonstration farm. What originally began as a 5,000-acre farm about twenty

[57] Masakazu, *Planted in Good Soil*, 176-177.
[58] Daniel, *Bitter Harvest*, 75.
[59] Hurt, American Agriculture, 239.

miles west of Fargo grew to 32,000 acres by 1885, producing 600,000 bushels of wheat annually. At that time, the Cass-Cheney bonanza farm relied on the labor of six-hundred men during the planting season, eight-hundred men at harvest time, and several managers to oversee the operations. In 1900, after almost thirty years of collecting land, the Darlymple family owned almost 100,000 acres. The land was divided into different farms and ranches that engaged in a variety of agricultural work. Even though mechanization reduced the number of men needed to work at harvest time, the farm still employed hundreds of workers into the twenties.[60]

During the nineteenth century, farm hands, or landless agricultural workers, hoped to work and save enough to purchase land of their own. However, this dream became untenable in western states by the early twentieth century when the "agricultural ladder" broke—the cost of farm land and equipment became so prohibitive for agricultural workers that farming in the western states became almost exclusively reliant on the labor of migrant and seasonal workers who would never achieve the status of independent farmers themselves. Mechanization often reduced the need for laborers. However, this was not the case in wheat farming: "The expanding wheat belt," according to historian Greg Hall, "required tens of thousands of migrant and seasonal agricultural laborers to harvest and thresh the crop." A federal study of farm labor in 1870 recorded 2,885,996 wage workers in agriculture; by 1900, that number had increased to 4,410,877—the most drastic growth occurring in the Great Plains. Migrant labor proved especially vital for wheat production. During the harvest season of 1912 in Kansas, 85 percent of the workforce came from out of state.[61]

[60] "Reading 2: The Bonanza Farms of North Dakota," National Park Service, Teaching with Historic Places website, https://www.nps.gov/articles/wheat-farms-flour-mills-and-railroads-a-web-of-interdependence-teaching-with-historic-places.htm; Greg Hall, *Harvest Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World and Agricultural Laborers in the American West, 1905-1930* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2001), 5, 11-14. Another farm that illustrates the bonanza farming of the Plains states is the Frederick A. and Sophia Bagg Bonanza Farm in North Dakota (Frederick A. and Sophia Bagg Bonanza Farm, NHL, 2005). Other farms in this region may not exhibit national significance but should be explored for their local/regional importance and for possible listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

[61] Hall, *Harvest Wobblies*, 16-17.



"Harvest hands on their way to the wheat fields of the Northwest," Harper's Weekly, December 13,1890 *(National Register of Historic Places collection)*

The "harvest stiffs," as the migratory workers in the wheat fields were called, tended to be single White males in their twenties and thirties. In the southern Plains, immigrants and African Americans were rare—some farmers specifically stated that they 'cannot use colored' in their advertisements to recruit workers. In the northern Plains, however, the migratory work force did consist of some immigrant men, notably Scandinavians, Finns, and Germans. Most of the native-born workers came from the Mississippi Valley or Midwest, with many coming from the state of Missouri. The wheat migrants traveled almost entirely by rail. While some paid for a ticket—"riding the cushions"—most arrived at the fields by way of freight train. Railroad workers understood the importance of freight trains for transporting harvest workers and tended to "look the other way" at the thousands of harvesters who boarded the boxcars—but only during harvest season. Migrants also had to watch out for the police who would arrest them for vagrancy if they remained in town too long after the harvest had ended. Moreover, bands of local vigilantes formed to force migrants out or even prevent them from getting off of trains during slack seasons. For many of these itinerant laborers, the only refuge they could find was in the "jungles," communities of migrant workers that formed near railroad tracks, often close to streams or creeks and well past the outskirts of towns. Sometimes before moving on down the line the residents of these camps would leave clean cooking utensils behind for the next group of migrants to use.[62]

[62] Hall, *Harvest Wobblies*, 20-21, 23, 27-28. While these often became sites of refuge, the jungles could also harbor danger as well. Crime, even murder, was commonplace within the makeshift communities.

California, as already noted, was another major employer of migrant labor. In 1860, 13,541 migrant workers were employed in the fields and orchards of California; by 1929, that number had grown to 196,812—a number that accounted for almost 60 percent of the persons employed in agriculture in the state. Conditions for migrant workers in California were often harsh, and the workers were treated unfairly. Yet, labor unions often ignored these workers because of the peripatetic nature of their working lives and the difficulties unions faced in organizing the diverse workers. Any group interested in organizing farm workers had to overcome strong ethnic and racial divisions. Furthermore, the migratory nature of these workers gave them little leverage when negotiating with growers.

Despite these obstacles, the radical labor union Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) entered the world of collectivizing migrant workers shortly after the union formed in 1905. The IWW, unlike the craft-based AFL, sought to organize workers along industrial lines so that the unions would include all workers in each industry. Therefore, even though agricultural workers may have possessed differentiated skills that they developed from working in different types of agriculture, they were united in their shared experiences as *migrant workers*. Wobblies sought to organize migrant agricultural workers because they "represented a revolutionary class of workers who lived and worked at the margins of the labor movement despite their indispensable role in the West's major industries," according to Hall. Although the Wobblies wanted to create a multi-ethnic and multi-racial union among agricultural workers, they were not always successful. Japanese and Chinese workers in California, for instance, largely preferred their own mutual aid societies that often acted in a labor union capacity. Wobblies did have more success among Mexican workers perhaps because members of this group, having arrived relatively recently, had not had time to develop their own ethnic organizations. Mexican IWW members in California even created a Spanish language newspaper to cater to the growing numbers of Mexican members.[63]

Wheatland Uprising

Although the Wobblies became particularly known for organizing miners throughout the West, author and editor Cary McWilliams observed that the roots of the organization could actually be located in migrant labor in California. After winning two notorious free speech struggles in Fresno and San Diego in 1910 and 1912, respectively, the IWW began to attract greater attention and establish more locals throughout the state. Even though their numbers were small, their reputation loomed large. They were especially known for launching job strikes by organizing laborers in the fields where they worked. Their first major battle occurred on August 3, 1913, on the Durst Hop Farm near Wheatland, California. That year, grower Ralph Durst had advertised for workers throughout California, Oregon, and Nevada. He requested 2700-2800 workers when he really only needed about 1500 in the fields.[64] Regardless, a huge influx of agricultural workers descended on the farm, taking trains from far-away locations or walking from relatively nearby towns and cities. They represented a mix of races and ethnicities—over half of the

[63] Hall, Harvest Wobblies, 55, 58.

[64] According to a commission that investigated the incident, Durst advertised for more workers than he needed in order to keep wages down.

workers who arrived on the Durst farm were immigrants from countries including Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Poland, Spain, Syria, and Turkey.

Durst provided the tents for some, but not all, of the 2800 men, women, and children who encamped on a low hill on the property. All residents had to pay a weekly fee of seventy-five cents for space at the labor camp; those who were not able to procure a provided tent had to construct their own with whatever materials they could find. The overcrowded tent camp had nine rudimentary outdoor toilets. The water wells were situated dangerously close to the toilets and other garbage areas, such that diseases like typhoid, dysentery, and malaria ravaged the camp. Drinking water was not supplied in the fields, but a Durst family member offered powdered lemonade at five cents a glass. Eventually, conditions such as these prompted workers to organize, and a group of one hundred workers, including Japanese, Indian, and Puerto Rican immigrants, joined forces with local IWW representatives to agitate for change.

Workers earned between seventy-eight cents and a dollar a day; at least a thousand workers remained unemployed throughout the season because of the oversupply of laborers. While wages were bad, it was the abominable living circumstances and unduly harsh working conditions that spurred workers to organize. The workers' demands illustrated the diverse nature of the agricultural workforce, particularly the strong presence of female workers. For instance, two of the strikers' demands sought to remedy working conditions that were especially hard for women—such as the absence of "high pole men," who helped pickers reach hops at the top of the tall vines; and the expectation that workers load the hop bags, which could weigh upwards of one hundred pounds, onto the wagons without assistance.

When the Wobbly organizers held a mass meeting on the night of August 3, approximately 2000 workers attended. In the middle of the meeting, the sheriff, local district attorney (who was also Durst's personal attorney), and other figures in law enforcement arrived to arrest the speakers. When a deputy fired a shot in the air, allegedly to cool the agitated workers down, a fight erupted. In the riot that ensued, the district attorney, a deputy sheriff, a Puerto Rican worker and an English boy were killed. The law enforcement fled and the Governor, shocked by descriptions of the riot, sent in four National Guard companies to Wheatland. Panic over the incident sparked a "reign of terror" in which Wobblies throughout the state faced arrest and persecution. Those arrested faced beatings and were often held in confinement and denied access to legal counsel.

In 1939, McWilliams wrote, "Wheatland was not a strike, but a spontaneous revolt. It stands out as one of the significant episodes in the long and turgid history of migratory labor in California. For the first time, the people of California were made to realize, even if vaguely, the plight of its thousands of migratory workers." It was also a community strike that both men and women led. In fact, women played a major role in this particular uprising. Historian Vincent DiGirolamo argues that the migrant women were responsible for "pressing the Wobblies into action," and once the strike began, they were at the forefront of the action. Furthermore, during the ensuing trial of the IWW leaders, feminist groups and other civic women's clubs led the effort to

generate support for the accused men—generating petitions and fundraising for their defense costs.[65]

The events in Wheatland brought Progressive era reform into the agricultural sector of southern California. It sparked an investigation into the conditions of migrant workers by the Commission on Immigration and Housing in California, which concluded that the riot was caused by inadequate housing and poor sanitary conditions. This became the springboard for the commission's effort to institute health and sanitation regulations in the labor camps of migrant workers. Even though the IWW was ultimately unable to successfully organize workers in Wheatland and other regions of California, this did not stop them from continuing to try. During a convention in Kansas City on April 15, 1915, IWW members debuted their official agricultural workers' union. Called the Agricultural Workers Organization (AWO), the union was based on an industrial unionism with revolutionary goals. Through the AWO, Wobblies would continue to organize in the fields, in "jungles," on rails, and anywhere else migrant agricultural laborers could be found.[66]



(L) ***Hoeing sugarcane on plantation in Louisiana, 1937*** *(Dorothea Lange, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*
(R) ***Cabins for sugarcane workers, Bayou La Fourche, LA, 1937*** *(Dorothea Lange, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

The Sugar Industry

California wheat, vegetable, and fruit growers; Texan cotton planters; and Plains wheat farmers were not the only ones to employ migrant workers. Another area of American agriculture that relied heavily on seasonal workers was the sugar industry. In the mainland United States, the sugar industry developed in the Midwest and West through large-scale sugar beet farms. During the early years of the twentieth century, sugar beets were providing more refined sugar than sugar cane; over half of the sugar factories were in western states. The sugar beet region spanned from the upper Midwest to the west coast. The Great Western Sugar Company pioneered the industry of extracting sugar from sugar beets and established the first sugar factory in Grand

[65] Vincent DiGirolamo, "The Women of Wheatland: Female Consciousness and the 1913 Wheatland Hop Strike," *Labor History* Volume 34, Issue 2-3 (1993), 250, 252, 241, 249-52.

[66] Cary McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1939), 154-64; Daniel, *Bitter Harvest*, 88-91; Hall, *Harvest Wobblies*, 48-54, 85-86; Dick Meister and Anne Loftis. *Long Time Coming: The Struggle to Unionize America's Farm Workers* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 11-17.

Junction, Colorado. Sugar beet growers relied heavily on ethnic migrant labor. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Mexican families migrating north from Texas came to dominate the agricultural labor force in states like Michigan; other ethnic groups that harvested beets in western states included Japanese and German-Russian immigrants.[67]

While the sugar industry in the Northwest and Western regions focused on sugar beets, sugar production in the Deep South centered on sugar cane. Large-scale sugar cane plantations developed in states along the Gulf of Mexico, especially Louisiana, prior to the Civil War and continued to operate throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. Initially, enslaved people and then African American farm laborers constituted the agricultural work force of this industry. While workers on sugar plantations remained primarily African American, by the late nineteenth century they were joined by a new ethnic group: Italians. Thousands of Italians migrated to the sugar fields during the fall harvest season. Like other migrant workers, they were often a transient presence, a response to a labor shortage; yet many also stayed, such that by 1900 Italians represented the largest immigrant group in Louisiana.

The Italian migrants largely fell into two camps: Italians and Italian Americans. The Italians' migration was substantial, for most of the workers traveled directly from Italy (usually Sicily, which had established close ties to New Orleans through trading) for the grinding season, which lasted from October through December, and returned to their homes after it was over. Many Italian Americans came from their homes in Chicago and other northern cities. White growers regarded the Italians as socially and economically similar to African Americans, particularly because Italians took over jobs that African Americans formerly held. In many cases, Italian migrants served as a substitute labor force when African Americans went on strike for higher wages or simply moved to other agricultural fields in the North that had reputations for being less exploitative. Like African American workers before them, the Italian migrants usually occupied the least-skilled and lowest-paying positions.[68]

Not only was the sugar industry important for shaping the development of American agriculture, but it also influenced the nature of American imperialism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sugar consumption hit new highs in America (and Europe) in the 1880s. Sugar was a major export of Cuba and became one of the reasons why the United States became economically invested there, as well as in Puerto Rico, by the late 1890s.

Puerto Rico had a much more diversified agricultural landscape than Cuba, where large sugar plantations were the agricultural norm. Coffee was perhaps the largest crop that Puerto Rican farmers produced for global markets, but it did not dominate the island's economy like sugar did in Cuba. In addition to providing coffee for mostly European markets, the island also exported cattle and tobacco. Smaller, independent farms—"haciendas"—rather than large plantations characterized the agricultural practices on the island. Peasants and agricultural workers supplied much of the labor for the haciendas. However, once the United States took over Puerto Rico as an unincorporated territory in 1898, American boosters almost immediately started campaigns for business and agricultural interests to invest in the island, with an emphasis on expanding the

[67] Iwata, Planted in Good Soil, 167-76.
[68] Jean Ann Scarpaci, "Immigrants in the New South: Italians in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes, 1880-1910," in *Immigrants on the Land*, 329, 331, 336-338.

sugar industry. Within one year, two major sugar complexes were established: Central Aguirre Sugar Syndicate (1899) in Salinas, and the South Porto Rico Sugar Company (1900) in Guanica—both on the southern coast. After these companies were incorporated into the United States, they followed the American labor model and immediately began constructing company towns to house agricultural workers. Eventually, absentee owners living on the mainland controlled eleven companies producing over half of the sugar transported to the United States. During military occupation of Puerto Rico, the sugar industry boomed, and it continued to expand over the next thirty years. The true beneficiaries of this industry were bankers and refiners, because colonial legislation mandated that only raw sugar could enter the states. Through this stipulation, White Americans were able to take control of refining—the profitable final process of the sugar industry.[69]

Responding to the low wages and unfair treatment of sugar workers, labor organizers began to enter the fields and factories that spread across the island. In 1914 the Federación Libre de Trabajadores started organizing workers in the sugarcane industry, both in the fields and in the processing factories. Every year from 1914 to 1918 they launched strikes in which tens of thousands of workers participated. Even though it was affiliated with the reformist American Federation of Labor, the first generation of Federación Libre de Trabajadores members and organizers were influenced by radical political thought from the United States, Europe, and the Caribbean; many of them were sympathetic to socialism and anarchism. Although the organizers were predominantly male, there were also notable female organizers, such as Luisa Capetillo. Born in Arecibo in 1879 to politically radical parents, Capetillo would eventually hold a series of jobs that enabled her to become a key player in organizing Puerto Rican agricultural workers. After working in the textile industry for a while, Capetillo became a lectora at a local cigar factory. She would go on to write articles for labor newspapers and magazines as well as books and plays. She became one of many workers who took part in the Federación campaign to organize agricultural workers in 1904 and 1905.

After the failure of these early strikes, the Federación changed its strategy and initiated a campaign called La Cruzada del Ideal (The Crusade for Workers' Ideals), which Capetillo joined in 1909. During this campaign, she and other organizers went into towns, villages, and hamlets seeking to awaken workers' class-consciousness through educational programs, workshops, lectures, and informal talks in the fields. The Federación also participated in a wildcat strike of sugar workers over low wages in Bayamon in January 1915. The strike included almost 18,000 workers, but it collapsed when law enforcement resorted to violence, attacking picket lines and parades, injuring and jailing many, and killing six strikers. That same year, the Federación formed a workers' party, Partido Socialista, and launched a simultaneous effort to incorporate workers into the political process.[70]

[69] Dionicio Nodín Valdés, *Organized Agriculture and the Labor Movement before the UFW: Puerto Rico, Hawai'i, California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 6, 14-22, 27.

[70] Valdes, *Organized Agriculture and the Labor Movement Before the UFW*, 43-45. A major difficulty, however, in politically organizing sugar workers was that a vast majority of them were illiterate, and Puerto Rico maintained literacy requirements for voting until 1936.

Sugar, as anthropologist Sidney Mintz has demonstrated, irrevocably shaped patterns of labor and consumption on a global scale.[71] It is also a regional story; as the largest employer on the island during the early twentieth century, the sugar industry had a profound impact on the history of labor in Puerto Rico. At the same time, this is a national story, for, as historian Dionicio Nodín Valdes explains, the Puerto Rican sugar industry "was the most intense concentration of wage-earning agricultural workers in a single industry and concentrated setting under the United States flag."[72]



A meeting in support of a strike at the sugar mill, Yabucoa, Puerto Rico, 1941 *(Jack Delano, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

War and Peace

Farmers, particularly wheat farmers, benefitted immensely from World War I. With troops to feed and clothe, the military became a major buyer of farm goods. Moreover, American farmers supplied the French and British armies as well. Because of these circumstances, the war tightened the relationship between farmers and the government. For example, the Food Production Act of 1917 enabled the USDA to put farm and home demonstration agents in every farming county in the country; many of these agents also served on local draft boards and determined who could avoid the draft to stay on their farms. The government also set prices that were high enough to encourage greater production. This greatly aided farmers and precipitated

[71] In this regard, Mintz is perhaps best known for his study, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985). He also researched the sugar industry specifically in Puerto Rico, publishing an ethnography of one worker's experience in *Worker in the Cane: A Puerto Rican Life History* (New York: Norton) in 1974.

[72] Valdes, Organized Agriculture and the Labor Movement Before the UFW, 56.

an explosion of wheat production. Perhaps the government's attitude towards farmers is best illustrated by the Food Administration's motto: "Food Will Win the War."[73]

One group of agricultural workers especially affected by the war were Mexican migrants. The sugar beet industry began to actively recruit Mexican workers after WWI restrictions on immigration cut the supply of workers from Eastern Europe who had traditionally worked the beet fields. A majority of the migrants went to work for sugar beet farmers in Michigan, although farmers in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Iowa also employed Mexican labor. Agents from the Michigan sugar companies recruited Mexican workers and their families by traveling to Texas. Cities like El Paso, Laredo, Fort Worth, and San Antonio became major sites of recruitment, where labor agents promised higher wages in the sugar beet fields than workers were getting in Texas. Labor recruiters would contract whole families; since wages were low, having all members work in the fields was a necessity for the migrant families. The first Mexicans to arrive in Minnesota came when the Crystal Sugar Company first hired them in 1907; their numbers grew such that by 1928 over 7,000 Mexicans were working in the state. By 1927 an estimated 58,000 Mexicans worked 800,000 acres of sugar-beet fields from northwestern Ohio to eastern Colorado.[74]

As the terminus of all train routes in Texas, San Antonio became the transportation hub and the place where most of the sugar beet recruiting took place. Migrants would come to the city specifically to seek employment in the northern Midwest. The place for those looking for work became Milam Park, nicknamed La Plaza Zacate. Itinerant railroad workers, miners from western silver mines, foundry men, packinghouse workers, and seasonal farm laborers all congregated there in the hopes of finding labor recruiters. The park was also a hub for political radicals—Mexican and American anarchists, IWW organizers, and socialist party members would often preach to the crowds that had gathered. Some spoke through translators and others addressed the workers directly in Spanish. They had to compete for attention with religious soapbox preachers. The labor recruiters from the sugar beet fields also knew to do their recruiting at Milam Park—with cash advances and train tickets for laborers and their families in hand.[75]

In addition to becoming a growing labor force in agricultural regions of the northern Plains states, Mexicans continued to be a strong presence in the Southwest, particularly in the Californian agribusinesses. In 1917, after the United States entered WWI, the Federal government eased the immigration policy toward Mexican immigrants so that migrant workers could work in the fields. This continued even after the war such that by the 1920s Mexican migrants became the dominant ethnic group among migrant workers in the fields and orchards of California.

However, as they had done with the Japanese before, growers misjudged Mexicans as a weak and docile labor force that would passively accept low wages and poor working conditions. By the 1920s, Mexican farm workers began to organize, first in Los Angeles through the

[73] Hurt, Problems of Plenty, 36-37.
[74] Farmers referred to the boom years of the 1920s as the "Mexican Harvest." Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 3-4, 25-26.
[75] Vargas, Proletarians of the North, 18-19, 25.

Confederación de Uniones de Obreros Mexicanos (CUOM), which aimed to promote bread-and-butter unionism for Mexican migrant workers (improving wages and working conditions). The 2,000 to 3,000 workers who constituted the local affiliates sought to end the "exploitive labor contracting system that governed employment in large-scale agriculture." Right before harvest season in the cantaloupe fields, in the early spring of 1928, Mexican farmworkers in the Imperial Valley formed La Union de Trabajadores del Valle Imperial. With the assistance of the local consul at Calexico, Carlos Ariza, and local mutual aid societies, some of the 1,200 members went on strike when growers refused to raise wages and improve working conditions. Although growers joined forces to defeat the strike, it was one of the first forms of labor militancy that indicated that Mexican workers were not as meek as growers had thought. But the strike also revealed several problems among the newly-organizing workers—the group lacked strong leadership, and the members were united in their ethnic identity and thus made no overtures to include Filipino workers, who constituted another significant portion of the agricultural labor force. The Filipino workers' history of militancy might have helped the strike out in the long run.[76]



Picketers with signs: "Help the Southern Tenant Farmers Union," etc., Washington, DC, 1935
(LOC P&P, Harris & Ewing Photo Collection)

The Depression Era

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, particularly because of the wartime demand, farmers did rather well financially. However, as they increased their crop specialization to meet market demands, they became more reliant on purchasing food and other necessities from stores rather than consuming their own products. This became especially problematic because farmers continued to have no control over the market and prices—they "sold wholesale

[76] Daniel, *Bitter Harvest*, 106-109.

and bought retail." This situation worked well when wholesale prices remained high, but when these prices collapsed in the 1920s, many farmers were hit especially hard. By the summer of 1920, the price of corn had dropped by 78 percent, wheat by 64 percent, and cotton by 57 percent from the wartime prices. As prices fell, the debt farmers owed to banks, mortgage and insurance companies grew; as a result, many lost their farms to foreclosure. During the three-year recession, prices never fell to prewar levels, but farmers' overinvestment in growth and machinery during the flush years made the postwar recession much worse. The surpluses produced by farmers of corn, wheat, tobacco, rice, and cotton produced further depressed prices. Through it all, the number of farmers continued to dwindle as children, and even some parents, left farms for more lucrative wage work in the growing cities.[77]

As they had in the past, some farmers began to organize politically to push for reforms to alleviate their economic hardship. During the 1920s farmers formed the Farm Bureau and the Farm Bloc, which created a powerful farm lobby in Congress. On the Federal level, farm lobbyists and friends of agriculture in Congress pushed several versions of the McNary-Haugen Bill. Named after two Republicans, Charles McNary (Senate) and Gilbert N. Haugen (House), the bills were reminiscent of the Populists' subtreasury plan in that they sought to use Federal action to boost agricultural prices. In this case, the bills called for the government to purchase farm surpluses and then sell them to overseas markets. Although President Coolidge vetoed the bills twice, this action served as a precursor to the types of legislation that would characterize the agricultural programs of the New Deal.

As legislation such as the McNary-Haugen Bill slowly made its way through government bureaucracy only to be stymied by presidential vetoes, farmers, particularly in the Midwest, no longer saw political maneuvering as a way to alleviate their problems. After the Great Depression hit, signaled by plummeting prices and skyrocketing foreclosures, farmers began to see direct action as perhaps a better—and faster—solution. With Milo Reno as their leader, members of the Farmers Union called for a farm "holiday" in February 1932, in which farmers would refuse to buy or sell, an action they believed would cause food processing plants to cease production and leave grocery store shelves empty.

To implement this plan, The Farmers' Holiday Association formed on May 3, 1932. Through this kind of drastic action, Farmers' Holiday members believed that the government would be forced to intervene and "guarantee farmers cost-of-production process plus a profit of about five percent," according to Douglas Hurt. After that was achieved, then farmers would go back to work. Emil Loriks, a former South Dakota state senator from 1927-1934, describes the members of his local Farmers' Holiday branch as a diverse lot: "Among the members of our Holiday Association were bankers, businessmen, the president of the Farm Bureau, and the Chamber of Commerce. They didn't stick their necks out too far, but the meetings were always jammed. People were hanging out of the windows. Our motto slogan was: 'Neither buy nor sell and let the taxes go to hell.'"[78] The Association launched their strike that August, an action complete with farmers emptying milk in ditches, blocking roads, and getting into altercations with police. One particularly massive demonstration took place on Highway 75 in South Dakota, with almost a thousand demonstrating farmers. The state almost called out the state militia, but Reno

[77] Hurt, *Problems of Plenty*, 13, 43-45.
[78] Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 227.

convinced the governor to hold off, fearing that it would lead to violence. Ultimately, however, the strike failed because it was based on faulty economics and because, with bills to pay and livestock to feed, farmers did not have the means to withstand a lengthy strike.[79]

Although the Holiday Association did not have the means to support a long strike, they were much more successful in working together to aid struggling farmers on a local scale. During the fall of 1932, the Association began "penny auctions" or "Sears-Roebuck sales." This was when local farmers bid a few cents for each item put up for auction at a foreclosure sale. For good measure, they also threatened bank officers and mortgage holders with physical harm if they did not accept the returns as full payment for the foreclosed farmers' debts. Loriks notes that one method of stopping foreclosure sales that Association members employed in Brown County, South Dakota, was to fill courtrooms—five or six hundred members and sympathizers would show up so that the offers could not execute the sales. Although never officially sanctioned, these auctions, which lasted from October 1932 through 1936, marked the apex of the Farmers' Holiday Movement. Yet another, more lasting program the movement initiated was their "councils of defense." Organized by county, the councils brought creditors and debtors together to work out refinancing plans and devise ways to repay debts, which saved many farmers from foreclosure. The Holiday movement declined once the Roosevelt administration began to roll out programs designed to aid struggling farmers.[80]

As radical as groups like Farmers' Holiday Association may have seemed, they were actually rather reformist. Loriks even describes his local as a conservative group; the more radical farmers in northern South Dakota organized under the United Farmers' League.[81] During the early Depression years, the most radical agricultural organizations tended to form in regions with the greatest number of exploited workers. In particular, young communist and socialist activists worked to organize sharecroppers and tenant farmers in the South, whose suffering was actually worsened by New Deal agricultural legislation.

Reform to Radicalism

During the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the system of sharecropping took root throughout the South such that, by 1900, non-land-owning farmers, including tenant farmers and sharecroppers, operated almost half of all farms in the region. Cotton continued to dominate the South under these circumstances because landowners refused to let their tenants diversify their crops. Cotton always had a market and it was non-perishable. To change this would require taking a risk and investing in new products and equipment, which meant spending money without a guarantee of return; hence landowners continued to prefer to hoe the same row that they had for decades.[82]

A life spent in sharecropping was difficult, to say the least. Women had a particularly hard time—working in the fields, bearing and raising children, taking care of the home, dealing with

[79] Hurt, *Problems of Plenty*, 58; Terkel, *Hard Times* 227-228. Farmers' Holiday Associations were regionally and locally significant groups and their extant meeting halls should be explored for local/state significance as potential sites for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.
[80] Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 265; Studs Terkel, *Hard Times*, 227.
[81] Studs Terkel, *Hard Times*, 227.
[82] Hurt, Problems of Plenty, 7.

financial matters such as settling with landowners at the end of harvest season, and bringing in extra work such as laundry in an attempt to make ends meet. When men migrated to cities for work or to escape family troubles or racial violence in the countryside, women were left to maintain the household. Some of these women had the benefit of extended family networks nearby, but many headed households completely by themselves. In both instances, women had to survive largely without the economic support of adult male workers.[83]

In January 1931, five-hundred sharecroppers launched an uprising in England, Arkansas, to protest their economic conditions. This action inspired sharecroppers in Alabama and led to the formation of the Croppers' and Farm Workers' Union (CFWU), a Communist-affiliated union that formed in Tallapoosa County in the eastern Piedmont of the state. At that time, 70 percent of those engaged in farming in Alabama were either tenants or wage workers; most of them were sharecroppers, and a majority of them were African American. Many of the tenants who orchestrated the union's formation lived in the southeastern portion of the county. A key leader among them was Estelle Milner, a schoolteacher who came from a sharecropping family. She, along with brothers Tommy and Ralph Gray, spearheaded the effort to bring an organizer from the Communist Party to start a union of sharecroppers. Later that year, the newly formed union issued a series of demands, which included a continuation of food advances from landlords; the right to plant small gardens; a minimum wage of one dollar per day; a three-hour midday rest for all laborers regardless of race, sex, or age; a nine-month school year for African American children with free transportation to and from school; and sharecroppers' right to market their own crops. This last demand stemmed from the fact that landlords often bought tenants' bales at the lowest price of the year and held onto them until prices rose. This practice denied the sharecroppers the highest return on their products. By July of that year, the CFWU had grown to eight-hundred members. In the face of brutal acts of repression on the part of local White vigilantes and law enforcement, the union collapsed, but soon another took its place. Fifty-five members of the CFWU regrouped on August 6, 1931, and launched a new union called the Share Croppers Union (SCU). Eventually, they managed to organize five locals in the county.

One of the SCU's first main actions was to initiate strikes among tenants and sharecroppers in the midst of mass evictions that followed in the wake of the Depression. Although these strikes failed when armed groups forced the pickers back into the fields and law enforcement arrested the union leaders, the action did spur a growth in union membership. The union then organized another strike, which started on B. W. Meadow's plantation in Tallapoosa County and spread to seven nearby plantations. Again, the strikers and organizers faced beatings, shootings, and threats of lynching, but this time they won some victories. Workers on most of the local plantations gained a rate increase; on Howard Graves's plantation, they won their full demand of one dollar per one-hundred pounds and received a five-dollar increase in monthly credit allowances.[84]

The problems in the cotton fields constituted one piece of an elaborate puzzle of agricultural strife in the United States during the Depression. To help alleviate the problems that farmers faced, Congress passed the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) on May 12, 1933. New Deal

[83] Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 36.
[84] Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 38-41, 54-55.

officials designed the Act to decrease surpluses and thus increase prices for cotton, tobacco, hogs, corn, rice, dairy, and wheat—an action for which farmers had pushed since the 1920s. The Act's primary goal was to raise prices for farmers' goods as well as to increase their purchasing power, which would also help to stimulate the economy. The government targeted these commodities because they were processed and largely sold for export. As such, the farmers in these areas were suffering to a greater extent than farmers who produced for internal markets. The AAA also paid farmers to plow up a percentage of their crop. This was especially the case in cotton because, by the time the AAA was passed, much of the crop had already been planted. The farmers received money from the government for their efforts.[85]

The flow of federal money into the South helped spur the rise of mechanized farming in the region because farmers now had the means to purchase tractors. This also led to the "great enclosure movement in southern agriculture." Without the need for tenant farmers and sharecroppers to grow as much as possible (the government was paying them not to) and with tractors doing work that humans and mules had formerly done, landowners started evicting tenants from their homes, although they would rehire them as day laborers during harvest season. The AAA, in effect, ended up hurting the people who actually needed financial relief the most: tenants and sharecroppers. Since they were not landowners, they did not get direct relief from the government, and relief the government paid to landowners actually led to their eventual displacement.[86]



(L) ***"Tractored-out" tenant farmhouse, Texas Panhandle, 1938*** *(Dorothea Lange, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*
(R) ***Caterpillar tractor on large-scale operation, San Joaquin Valley, CA, 1939*** *(Dorothea Lange, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

[85] Erik Gellman and Jarod Roll, "Owen Whitfield and the Gospel of the Working Class in New Deal America, 1936-1946," *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 72, no. 2 (May, 2006): 308; Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 Pub. L. No. 73-10, 48 Stat. 31 (Originally cited as ch. 25, 48 Stat. 31), 32-35, 38, The National Center for Agricultural Law Research and Information University of Arkansas, http://nationalaglawcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/farmbills/1933.pdf, accessed August 18, 2018. Each state that participated in the program was given a quota of how much cotton acreage must be plowed up, based on a 30 percent reduction of the production figures from 1931. In Arkansas, this meant that 1,002,300 of the 3,341,000 acres of cotton had to be destroyed (Keith J. Volanto, "The AAA Cotton Plow-Up Campaign in Arkansas," The Arkansas Historical Quarterly, vol. 59, no. 4 (Winter, 2000): 392, 404).

[86] Hurt, Problems of Plenty, 68-75.

By 1934, some members of the AAA's Cotton Section realized the plight of sharecroppers and tried to force farmers to share their checks with their tenants (often to no avail) and allow them to stay in their homes from 1934 through 1935. However, Henry Wallace, the Secretary of Agriculture, disagreed with these critics and fired those who advocated on behalf of sharecroppers over government support for large landowners. Furthermore, sharecroppers had no recourse on the local level because the AAA had put landowners in charge of administering the program in each county—the very people from whom the tenants sought redress.[87]

In the spring of 1934, eleven White and seven Black men met in a schoolhouse named Sunnyside near Tyronza, Arkansas, and decided to take action. They were from tenant families that had, until that point, lived and worked on a 5,000-acre plantation owned by Hiram Norcross.[88] According to their account, Norcross had evicted twenty-three families (out of 248 that worked and lived on his land) to avoid having to loan them money so that they could survive through the planting season. They had an idea to start an interracial union but were wary—memories were still fresh of the Elaine Massacre that occurred in nearby Phillips County, Arkansas. During the early fall of 1919, mobs of White civilians, law enforcement, soldiers, and National Guardsmen killed an estimated 200 Black men, women, and children (some estimates are higher). To fight the exploitation inherent in sharecropping, Black sharecroppers had formed the Progressive Farmers and Laborers Household Union of America to demand a more equitable share of the profits for the cotton they produced. On the night of September 30th, a group of local Whites fired into a church where the sharecroppers were meeting. One of the perpetrators was killed in the return fire, which sparked violent retaliation by local Whites and law enforcement.[89] After the attacks, and despite the fact that the violence was perpetrated against the Black community, twelve African Americans were sentenced to death and eighty were sentenced to prison terms from one to upwards of twenty years.

Despite this recent memory, the sharecroppers who met that day agreed to form an interracial union to fight the surge of evictions that accompanied the AAA policies. With help from local socialists—Ward Rodgers, Claude and Joyce Williams, and J. R. Butler—they drafted a constitution for the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union (STFU) and secured a charter for the fledgling organization. The office for the STFU became a back room of the dry-cleaning store that H. L. Mitchell, a founding member, ran in the town of Tyronza (currently the site of the STFU museum). STFU members tried to get legal recourse for the tenants evicted from the Norcross property—nine members even staged a picket outside of the AAA headquarters in May 1935, and the problem was brought before Henry Wallace. Wallace, however, determined that the AAA would not intervene in this case. Shortly thereafter, he fired the four members of the AAA who had pushed for intervention, thus eliminating the sharecroppers' advocates from the federal agency. Yet, even with the loss of sympathizers in the AAA, the STFU continued to

[87] Ibid, 68-75. This was before Wallace traveled to the South and witnessed the conditions sharecroppers suffered firsthand.

[88] M. Langley Biegert, "Legacy of Resistance: Uncovering the History of Collective Action by Black Agricultural Workers in Central East Arkansas from the 1860s to the 1930s," *Journal of Social History*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Autumn, 1998): 73-75.

[89] Jason Manthorne, "The View from the Cotton: Reconsidering the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union," *Agricultural History*, vol. 84, no. 1 (2010): 22). For a debate on the extent of soldiers' participation in the massacre, see Grif Stockley and Jeannie M. Whayne, "Federal Troops and the Elaine Massacres: A Colloquy," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 3 (Autumn, 2002): 272-283.

advocate the same position as the ousted federal officials—that tenants should not lose their homes as a consequence of the crop reduction plan. The union soon spread across seven states and garnered thirty thousand members. Despite their indefatigable efforts, however, the STFU could not stem the tide of mass evictions that swelled across the South.[90]

The STFU illustrates an important non-industrial dimension of the American labor movement, while also demonstrating the strong strains of political radicalism in early twentieth century labor organizing. While syndicalist IWW organizers worked with migrant workers in the bonanza farms of the upper Midwest and California during the first two decades of the century, and Communists helped organize sharecroppers in Alabama during the early 1930s, socialism prevailed among the STFU leadership. H.L. Mitchell and Clay East were both Socialist Party members; Mitchell, along with fellow activist Alvin Nunally established the state's first chapter of the Socialist Party, which was also one of the earliest in the South. The political activities (and proclivities) of Mitchell and East were renowned in Tyronza to the extent that local residents referred to the corner where Mitchell's dry-cleaning store and East's gas station were located as "red square."[91] While local conservative pressure eventually forced Mitchell to relocate the STFU headquarters to Memphis, it is important that the "radicalism" that the STFU leaders espoused emerged from, and was in response to, local conditions; leaders and members were all local residents. This is significant for two reasons: the union's interracial stance illustrates a rebuttal to the entrenched segregation of the region, and the leaders' socialist views challenged the region's marked political conservatism.

Radical activism was not restricted to the southern cotton fields. At the same time that Communist organizers were working to unite sharecroppers, they were also moving into the world of migrant labor in southern California. They succeeded in galvanizing the agricultural labor force and spreading a sense of militancy in the fields through the Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union (CAWIU). Established in 1931, the union launched strikes among tree pruners; pea, peach, pear, grape, and berry pickers; and canning workers. But none of these efforts matched the events of the cotton strike of 1933.

[90] Anthony Dunbar, *Against the Grain: Southern Radicals and Prophets, 1929-1959* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1981), 88-89, 95; Hurt, *Problems of Plenty*, 73-75. See also Howard Kester, *Revolt Among the Sharecroppers* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1936); George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967).

[91] National Register of Historic Places, Tyronza Commercial Historic District, 8-10.



Mexican workers on strike, Powell Studio, Corcoran CA, October 1933 *(LOC P&P)*

1933 Cotton Strike

Although the New Deal labor policies aided the expansion of organized labor, particularly after the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), which protected workers' right to collective bargaining, the pro-labor New Deal policies did not extend to all workers. Fearful of losing the support of rural constituencies, the Roosevelt administration excluded farm workers from the protections afforded to industrial workers. Therefore, farm workers were not included in the wage and hour codes that applied to industrial workers (codified through the National Labor Relations Act of 1935). Instead, New Dealers continued to (wrongly) argue that farm laborers as well as sharecroppers and other exploited agricultural workers were protected under the AAA. With the exclusion of agricultural laborers from federal regulations, Communist organizers in the CAWIU argued that the government had little intention of actually protecting workers, much less farm workers. They essentially had to force this argument because many farm workers were buoyed by the passage of the NIRA, even though they were, in reality, excluded from its benefits.

The collision between Communists and New Dealers came to a head in the San Joaquin Valley cotton strike. When cotton farmers responded to declining cotton prices by slashing the already low wages of farm laborers, workers began to organize. In 1933, the cotton sector had improved economically, mostly because of the policies of the newly enacted AAA, but growers did not raise wages accordingly. The CAWIU leaders therefore had an easy time convincing cotton-pickers that the improved economic conditions of cotton agriculture should lead to a wage increase for the workers in the California cotton fields, and that they should demand this increase if growers did not comply.

The workers in the San Joaquin Valley represented the multicultural labor force that had come to characterize California agriculture: of the 15,000 cotton farm workers, 75 percent were

Mexicans, mostly migrant families. The rest were African American and White southern migrants and Filipino immigrants. The one thing they shared in common was an enthusiasm for the CAWIU's proposal. They wanted one dollar per one hundred pounds of cotton picked, an end to the contract labor system, a ban on discrimination against union workers, and an end to owners' hiring outside the union. On October 1, workers at a mass CAWIU meeting voted to launch a strike for the entire cotton season beginning on October 4, but many started walking out of, and picketing in front of, the fields immediately. When the strike became official, growers responded with typical violence. Widespread and immediate evictions of striking workers and their families from labor camps ensued, often with little or no warning. Law enforcement acquiesced to the blatant lawlessness of the economically and politically powerful growers in the region, largely out of fear of political reprisals.

However, the CAWIU had its own problems, mostly the need to overcome ethnic and racial barriers among the diverse workers. Furthermore, most, if not all, of the Communist organizers were White and trying to recruit a minority workforce. Some leaders recognized the need to get strike leaders from among the workers—leaders who represented each ethnic group—involved. During an altercation at a meeting in Woodville between strikers and growers, the strikers managed to put aside their differences by fighting a common foe. Out of this conflict emerged "Big Bill" Hammett, an Oklahoma migrant who became the leader of the movement. With the CAWIU's urging, three other delegates representing African American, Filipino, and Mexican strikers joined his leadership circle.

While government officials grew increasingly concerned about the growers' recalcitrance at negotiating with strikers and local law enforcement's refusal to curb their actions against the strikers, violence came to a head on October 9 in the town of Pixley. That day, a group of forty growers descended upon a meeting of strikers protesting the arrests of picketers at a nearby ranch. Organizers ended the meeting when the growers arrived for fear of violence. When workers moved from the vacant lot where they were meeting to the union hall, a grower fired his rifle. A striker pushed his barrel to the ground and was beaten and shot to death by other men in the group of growers. More growers proceeded to shoot at the fleeing strikers and families, following them into the union hall. Meanwhile, members of the local law enforcement watched the whole incident. Eventually, the police officers slowly pursued the caravan of growers after they left the scene, pulled them over, gathered their weapons, and sent them on their way. In the end, two workers were killed and eight injured.

Simultaneous with the event at Pixley, armed growers attacked strikers in the town of Arvin. After word of these incidents spread, New Deal officials stepped in and crafted a settlement plan to end the strike. Using the threat of excluding the growers from federal farm programs as well as providing federal relief for the striking workers, New Deal officials convinced growers to agree to the government's fact-finding commission (although they stated that they would not be bound to any decisions that it made—a sentiment that the strikers shared). In the end, on October 26, the strike was called off. Workers had their wages increased by 25 cents per one hundred pounds but did not get their desired one dollar per pound. The union did not receive recognition,

and neither side was happy with the terms of the resolution. The only victors were the New Deal officials, whom both workers and growers now looked upon with ire.[92]

The CAWIU eventually dissolved, but the goals of the union continued with the formation of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA-CIO). Founded in 1937 by Don Henderson, a former economics professor at Columbia University and Communist Party member, UCAPAWA sought to organize those excluded by New Deal labor legislation, namely low wage, racially marginalized workers. The union first operated in the Northeast, Midwest, and West, and achieved some success in organizing Mexican, Black, Asian, and white workers on the West Coast. Soon, the union entered southern agricultural fields, temporarily working alongside the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. Organizing low wage migrant laborers proved enormously difficult, however, and UCAPAWA eventually moved away from agricultural labor and focused instead on production workers in tobacco and canning plants. Their successes, beginning with organizing tobacco workers at the R. J. Reynolds plant in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, led to their renaming as the Food, Tobacco, and Allied Workers (FTA) in 1944.[93]





(L) ***Organizer for United Cannery Agricultural Packing and Allied Workers of America (Congress of Industrial Organizations-CIO) talks to crowd at street meeting in "Mexican" town outside of Shafter, CA, 1938*** *(Dorothea Lange, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*
(R) ***Committee from local chapter of UCAPAWA (United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America) meeting with Farm Security Administration supervisor to request assistance for sharecroppers and tenant farmers, Sapulpa, OK, 1949*** *(Russell Lee, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

[92] Daniel, *Bitter Harvest*, 174, 178-221. See also, Meister, *Long Time Coming*, 26-37.
[93] Robert Korstad, "United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America," *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History* Vol. III, Eric Arnesen, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1415; Shana L. Redmond, *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 155-56.



New and old homes of Clay Pettway, Gee's Bend, AL, 1939 *(Marion Post Wolcott 1939; LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

New Deal Rural Antipoverty Efforts

The AAA was only one component, albeit a major one, of the New Deal's effort to provide aid to struggling farmers. The same year that the AAA passed, the Roosevelt administration launched the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) as a vehicle to provide relief to unemployed Americans. The Administration included a Division of Rural Rehabilitation and Stranded Populations to provide emergency loans to needy farmers. Under the direction of Lawrence Westbrook, the Division established a series of rehabilitation projects—rural communities that provided farmers with farms. The intention was to help farmers get financially back on track and off relief. Of the five rehabilitation communities, the first was Roanoke Farms in Halifax County, North Carolina. The project consisted of two communities: the Tillery Project for African American farmers and the Halifax Farms for White farmers.[94]

The Division of Rural Rehabilitation, however, was short-lived, and after it folded poor farmers—especially tenant farmers and sharecroppers—found little recourse in AAA policies and programs. After the STFU protests in 1934-35 and the purging of sharecropper sympathizers from the AAA ranks, FDR passed an executive order in 1935 that created the Resettlement Administration (RA). With Rexford Tugwell, a reformist member of the AAA who had resigned in the aftermath of the purge, at the helm, the RA provided relief directly to poor farmers who needed help the most. Tugwell's main intention was to reestablish the independent family

[94] Donald Holley, "The Negro in the New Deal Resettlement Program," *Agricultural History* 45, no. 3 (July 1971): 182-83.

farm—to provide farming families with access to land without all the problems that accompanied traditional tenancy.[95] In the South, the RA programs targeted sharecroppers and tenant farmers by providing technical assistance and loan programs to help them purchase land; in the West the RA established federal camps for migrant families such as the one depicted in John Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*.[96]

Taking up where the Division of Rural Rehabilitation left off, the RA also began to establish rural resettlement projects, particularly for tenant farmers and sharecroppers who were displaced as a result of the AAA policies. The RA, and later the Farm Security Administration (FSA), established numerous farming communities across the country. The program's entire emphasis was on relief—helping qualified farmers to become economically self-sufficient. Through these projects, the RA created "cooperative enterprises" to help facilitate the production and marketing of goods that the farmers' produced. One notable example was a community for African American tenant farmers located at Gee's Bend in Alabama. Prior to the project, the land, which was a former cotton plantation, was owned by three absentee landlords and farmed by tenant families. The RA purchased the land at Gee's Bend and established a new community for residents. Anthropologists M. G. Trend and W. G. Lett explain, "On generous credit terms, participating farmers were sold new houses, outbuildings, and a five-acre garden plot. An additional ninety-five acres in dispersed fields were leased to each family. The intent was for the households to become self-sufficient through farming, stock raising, and truck gardening." The community also had several cooperative ventures such as a store, repair shop, cotton gin, gristmill, and warehouse, along with a livestock-breeding program and mechanized plowing and haying for the residents.[97]

[95] Rexford G. Tugwell, "The Resettlement Idea," *Agricultural History* 33, no. 4 (October 1959): 161.

[96] Jess Gilbert and Carolyn Howe, "Beyond 'State vs. Society': Theories of the State and New Deal Agriculture Policies," *American Sociological Review* 56, no. 2 (April 1991): 209, 214, 216.

[97] M. G. Trend and W. G. Lett, "Government Capital and Minority Enterprise: An Evaluation of a Depression-Era Social Program," *American Anthropologist* 88, no. 3 (Sept. 1986): 595-97. While these programs sought to help displaced farmers, some projects ended up displacing other communities. For example, in 1938 the FSA (which had taken over the RA) established a 9,000-acre project called Transylvania Project in East Carroll Parish in Louisiana. This all-white community actually ended up displacing a long-settled community of African American farmers, although the FSA sought to resettle the 250 displaced families in another Northeast Louisiana community called The Mounds. For further information on the racial politics of the FSA communities see Jane Adams and D. Gorton, "This Land Ain't My Land: The Eviction of Sharecroppers by the FSA," *Agricultural History* 83, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 323-351.




(L) ***Cooperative cotton gin and storage house, Gee's Bend, AL, 1939*** *(Marion Post Wolcott, LOC, P&P FSA/OWI)*
(R) ***Project families have their corn ground into meal at cooperative grist mill, Gee's Bend, AL, 1939*** *(Marion Post Wolcott 1939, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

All participants in the resettlement communities had to qualify for the program. As a relief agency, the first criterion was that the participants must have a demonstrated need for assistance, and they also had to have a background in farming. Furthermore, they needed to possess some level of fitness—families that were in good health were often selected first. According to agriculture economist Marion Clawson, who evaluated the program in 1943, those who demonstrated that they would be the ones most likely to succeed in this cooperative farming community venture were the ones most likely to be chosen.[98] Although many of the projects relocated people within a particular region, some projects required families to migrate over great distances. A key example of this kind of initiative was the Matanuska Colony Project, which began in 1935 near the village of Palmer, Alaska.

The Matanuska Colony, as it came to be known, began with 203 families from hard-hit agricultural areas in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Like the participants in other settlement communities, these families had to qualify for relief and have a background in agriculture; it also helped if they had knowledge of other skills required for building a new agricultural community such as carpentry or blacksmithing. They also were selected because they came from a region with a climate similar to southern Alaska and thus, it was presumed, would transition to a new life there more easily. Lots were assigned via lottery, with each family receiving a plot of forty acres; the unlucky ones who drew plots of poor land were able to acquire an additional forty acres. New residents had a selection of five different housing types—either of frame or log construction—designed by government architect David R. Williams.[99] While many families did not stay in the community for long, the Matanuska Colony, with many of the

[98] Marion Clawson, "Resettlement Experience on Nine Selected Resettlement Projects," *Agricultural History* 52, no. 1 (January 1978): 16.
[99] Arnold R. Alanen, "Midwesterners in the Matanuska Valley: Colonizing Rural Alaska during the 1930s," Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, vol. 8 (2000): 62.

buildings still intact, illustrates both the relief side and the experimental side of the New Deal response to the crisis in agriculture during the Depression.[100]



Japanese and/or Filipino workers packing pineapple at Hawaiian cannery, 1928 *(Edgeworth for Katakura & Company, NARA, Records of the Women's Bureau [86-G-5F-8])*

The Sugar and Pineapple Plantations of Hawaii

While the New Deal era is known for a period of heightened efforts to organize industrial workers, the period was also one of agitation among agricultural workers as well. One, often overlooked, group of these workers were those who labored in the sugar and pineapple plantations of Hawaii.

The late nineteenth-century sugar craze that had drawn the United States to Cuba and Puerto Rico also led political and economic interests to look westward. The sugarcane industry, in fact, was a primary incentive for the annexation of Hawaii in 1898.[101] Soon, sugar growers, which had consolidated into five major companies, came to dominate almost every aspect of economic life on the islands. Because the native Hawaiian population proved too small to satisfy the companies' labor needs, growers began recruiting from overseas. More than 400,000 workers

[100] Some buildings, and even whole districts, of these resettlement communities still exist. While not all fit the criteria required for a National Historic Landmark, they could be explored as local reflections of a national movement and thus could qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

[101] Dionicio Nodín Valdés, Organized Agriculture and the Labor Movement before the UFW: Puerto Rico, Hawaii, California (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 6.

from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Madiera, the Azores Islands, Puerto Rico, Spain, Germany, Russia, and Norway arrived between 1850 and 1930. Many of the initial immigrants came as contract workers and lived under conditions akin to indentured servitude. This system ended when the United States annexed Hawaii, prompting many to leave the islands for work in California agriculture. The planters responded by continuing to recruit internationally, specifically trying to create a diverse workforce in the attempt to thwart collectivization. They also created a caste system wherein jobs and wages were assigned along ethnic/racial lines.[102]

Even though the odds were against them, workers in Hawaii did attempt to organize to push for better working conditions and higher wages. Hawaiian agricultural workers launched their first strike in 1841, but this strike, like the many that followed, failed. The reason for Hawaiian workers' lack of success had much to do with the racial division of work. Because workers tended to work with others of their ethnicity, unions were organized along ethnic lines rather than encompassing all workers. Any kind of strike, therefore, was easily broken. The Japanese were particularly known for launching strikes, and planters responded by importing more Filipino workers; by the 1920s Filipinos dominated the plantation workforce. In 1919, the Japanese workers formed the Federation of Japanese Labor, which stretched across the Hawaiian Islands. That same year, Pablo Manlapit organized the Filipino Labor Union in Oahu; by the following year, both of these groups had gone on strike. Although the Japanese largely dominated the 1920 strike, Filipino workers formed an important constituency. Two years later Manlapit joined forces with George W. Wright, the head of the Machinists' lodge 1245, the strongest AFL local in Hawaii. Together, they organized the High Wage Movement in 1922, designed to fight the plantation oligarchy and revive the labor movement in Hawaii. Yet, the strikes that resulted from these efforts were not well organized and could not withstand the kind of violence that growers perpetrated against the striking workers, actions that local law enforcement aided.[103]

After the numerous strike failures, the need for workers to organize across ethnic lines became readily apparent. Leading this effort was a former sailor and labor activist named Jack Hall. Arriving in Honolulu in 1936 during a maritime strike, Hall became active in the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), which had gained a CIO charter in 1937. Hall led a strike of longshoremen in Kauai that year, many of whom had family and friends laboring in the fields. This prompted Hall to appeal to Harry Bridges, the head of the ILWU, to bring plantation workers into the union as well, an inclusion that would benefit the longshoremen by adding to their numbers. This strategy was designed to take advantage of the unique conditions of labor in Hawaii. Like that of the South, the agriculture of Hawaii was dominated by large plantations, but the geographical nature of the islands created a key difference: growers were entirely dependent on sea transportation to connect them to markets. To facilitate this, growers owned most of the stevedore firms that loaded produce and other goods onto ships. When CIO representatives began to organize longshoremen who worked as stevedores in the mid-1930s, they recognized the tactical advantage of uniting with plantation workers to increase workers' leveraging power;

[102] Meister, *A Long Time Coming*, 59-70.
[103] John Reinecke, *The Filipino Piecemeal Sugar Strike of 1924-1925* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 2, 8, 12.

if planters refused to accommodate field workers' demands, then stevedores could just refuse to load the produce, thus causing the system to grind to a halt.

Convincing workers to join a multiethnic union proved particularly difficult in Hawaii, with its long history of ethnically-based unions. A successful longshoremen strike in 1938 that included both Japanese and Filipino workers, however, convinced the field laborers to organize across ethnic lines. That year, the ILWU formed a political organization, the Kauai Progressive League, to elect a pro-labor candidate for local office. Although organizing efforts were curtailed by the martial law that was imposed on the islands after 1941, the ILWU was able to win contracts for workers once those restrictions were eased in 1943. With Hall acting as the regional director of the ILWU in 1944, the union continued with their political strategy by recruiting voters. A year later they succeeded in electing enough pro-labor candidates to secure the passage of the Employee Relations Act, which gave Hawaiian plantation workers the legal right to unionize—a right that farm workers on the U.S. mainland continued to be denied. While workers launched successful strikes in the sugar and pineapple plantations during the postwar years, Hall and others in the ILWU suffered when the anticommunist crusaders of the 1950s targeted them for their radical pasts, which had included working with communists. Nevertheless, the union persevered and continued to secure benefits for agricultural workers through the next few decades.[104]



Rio Vista Bracero Reception Center, El Paso, TX, 2018 *(Thomas H. Simmons, Front Range Research Associates)*

World War II and the Postwar Era

The demands of a new international war affected almost every industry in the United States, including agriculture. A need to feed and clothe a large army had helped farmers in the past, and it continued to do so during World War II. However, a large military mobilization had also

[104] Meister, *A Long Time Coming*, 59-70.

generated a labor shortage, especially in the agricultural sector. During WWII, this shortage was more a perception than a reality, but was a strong enough perception to profoundly alter labor patterns. Nowhere was this more evident than in the fields and orchards of the Southwest.

In 1942, growers in California convinced Congress that there was a dearth of farm laborers and that they needed assistance. Congress responded to their demands by creating the bracero program, in cooperation with Mexican officials, which permitted the USDA to "recruit, contract, transport, house, and feed temporary farm workers, known as braceros, for stoop labor in the vegetable and cotton fields of California," according to Douglas Hurt. This program was based on the assumption that White workers would not do the kind of stoop labor that Mexicans were willing to perform. When the bracero program began, the United States and Mexican governments had intended for it to regulate American growers' hiring of Mexican workers. Moreover, the Mexican male participants were supposed to *supplement* the American workforce—they would be hired only when there was a labor shortage in the fields. However, the program gave growers a great deal of leeway in keeping wages low and getting rid of workers who were considered problematic; it also displaced many Mexican American and African American workers who had been in the fields.



Mexican workers recruited and brought to the Arkansas valley, Colorado, Nebraska, and Minnesota to harvest and process sugar beets, 1943 *(LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

For the duration of the program, the braceros constituted an underpaid "alternative" labor force that was used to thwart the unionization of farm workers in the Southwest. Although there were regulations on how much braceros should be paid (thirty cents an hour) as well as food and transportation provisions, many of the regulations were not enforced. Despite a general lack of oversight, growers still complained because the seemingly pro-worker Farm Securities Administration directed the program. After the growers successfully lobbied for the government

to move the program under the control of the War Manpower Commission, practically all government oversight fell by the wayside. By 1945, Californian and Texan growers employed 50,000 braceros. With vast amounts of workers available to come in from Mexico at almost a moment's notice, Hurt writes, "the bracero program became a strike-breaking program sanctioned by the federal government at the behest of the growers."[105]

From the beginning, the bracero program had noticeable problems. Lee G. Williams, an official from the US Department of Labor who oversaw the program, referred to it as "legalized slavery." For the duration of the harvest season, workers' mobility was severely restricted, and leaving a job meant risking deportation. After going through one renewal in 1945, the program was stabilized through the passage of Public Law 78, a Congressional mandate that put the bracero program under the purview of the Department of Labor. This caused the number of braceros in the fields and orchards of California and Texas to explode. At the same time, it served to depress the wages of farm workers already in the region, a situation that caused many workers who had achieved relative stability in agricultural labor—enough to put down roots in an area—to become migrants again. Braceros were not supposed to compete for jobs with native workers, but that was often not the case, and their very presence thwarted workers from striking to improve working conditions and wages. In spite of this, some organizing in the field did occur, notably through the National Farm Labor Union, led by Ernesto Galarza, and the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC).[106]

The AWOC received a charter from the AFL-CIO in 1959. By that time, migrant farm workers were beginning to receive increasing political and media attention. That same year, the Senate Subcommittee on Migrant Labor formed, and, on Thanksgiving of the following year, Edward R. Murrow aired *Harvest of Shame*, his exposé of the poor living and working conditions that migrants endured. George Meany, the head of the AFL-CIO, had also been inspired to recognize the farm workers' union by the National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, a citizens' group with strong ties to political and church leaders and with Eleanor Roosevelt as chair.[107]

When the AWOC began, there were 350,000 workers in California agriculture, 90,000 of whom were braceros. The organization's primary purpose was to increase wages, shorten hours, and improve working conditions for field workers, as well as to finally end the bracero program. Their strategy centered on mobilizing workers and encouraging them to put pressure on growers in order to achieve these demands. Much of the initial "organizing mission" was, according to sociologist Marshall Ganz, "local, work centered, and short term." This began to change somewhat in 1961, after the AFL fired the head of the union, Norman Smith, and revoked the AWOC's charter for mismanagement and corruption within the leadership ranks. During the interim, rank-and-file leaders continued to mobilize workers. After an appeal by these workers, the AFL officially reinstated the union in 1962, and hired A. C. Green to lead it. Shortly

[105] Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 308-310; Meister, *Long Time Coming*, 71-74.
[106] Meister, Long Time Coming, 152-153. See also Mireya Loza, Defiant Braceros: How Migrant Workers Fought for Racial, Sexual, and Political Freedom (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2016)
[107] Marshall Ganz, "Resources and Resourcefulness: Strategic Capacity in the Unionization of California Agriculture, 1959-1966," *The Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 4 (January 2000): 1021.

thereafter, Green hired Larry Itliong (The Forty Acres, NHL, 2008), a Filipino labor leader who had close ties to Filipino labor contractors and leaders of work crews.[108]



AFL-CIO and AWOC members march in support of farm workers during the Delano strike, 1965. In the front row, left to right, are Larry Itliong, Walter Reuther, and Cesar Chavez *(George Ballis, WPRL)*

Itliong had a long history in labor activism. Shortly after arriving in the United States in 1929 at the age of 15, Itliong joined striking lettuce pickers in Washington. He would continue to organize cannery workers in the Alaskan salmon industry before returning to labor activism among California farm workers. In many ways, he belonged to a community of Filipino activists that had been working to unionize agricultural workers since the 1930s. In 1934, the Filipino Labor Union (FLU) had organized seven locals throughout California and counted almost 2,000 dues-paying members. The strongest of these locals was in Santa Maria, where members constructed a labor temple for the union; union dues covered the construction cost, which amounted to 8,000 dollars. Working with Anglo and Mexican unions, the FLU launched two successful strikes in 1934 and 1937. Even more successful than the FLU was the Filipino Agricultural Labor Association (FALA), which included agricultural workers as well as professionals, small business owners, foremen, and labor contractors. In 1939, FALA initiated a one-day strike among asparagus strikers in Stockton, California. For that one day, not one worker entered the 40,000 acres of asparagus that were ready for harvesting. The success was immediate, as growers quickly agreed to a collective-bargaining agreement with the pickers. As these examples indicate, there was a long history of labor militancy among the Filipino

[108] Ganz, "Resources and Resourcefulness," 1021-1023.

agricultural workers of California; it was a militancy that organizers like Itliong tapped during the Delano Grape Strike of 1965.[109]



Pickets during the grape and lettuce strike, ca. 1970 *(photographer unknown, WPRL)*

The Delano Grape Strike

While the AWOC was organizing farm workers, many of whom were Filipino, into the AFL-CIO, another organization emerged among Mexican and Mexican American workers. In 1962, Cesar Chavez founded the Farm Workers Association (FWA). The FWA focused on reaching out to Mexican American families that immigrated to the United States during the Mexican Revolution and thus had, by the early 1960s, developed strong roots in the agricultural region of central California. Because of their stability, many were reluctant to strike because if it failed, they could lose their jobs and homes, and even faced blacklisting. Memories of unsuccessful strikes in the early 1950s were still fresh in many of their minds. Women in these families were especially cautious, and Chavez knew he had to secure their commitment if the UFW was to succeed. One way that the UFW was able to reach this constituency was through two of its original founders: Dolores Huerta and Helen Chavez, Cesar's wife. "Without them," writer, activist, and farm worker Frank Bardacke writes, "there would have been no initial attempt to

[109] Matt Garcia, "A Moveable Feast: The UFW Grape Boycott and Farm Worker Justice," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, Spring 2013, No. 83 (2013): 153; Frank Bardacke, *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers* (London: Verso, 2011), 153.

organize the association. Just as without the support of women farm workers the FWA might have died in its infancy."[110]

It is not surprising that two organizations—one predominantly Filipino and one predominantly Mexican—would develop in this region. While these two groups had similar economic interests, ethnic differences often kept them apart. For instance, Dolores Huerta had spent time in the AWOC, but left after feeling that the union ignored Mexican workers.[111] Furthermore, growers had often exacerbated ethnic differences by pitting Filipino and Mexican workers against each other in order to keep wages low and to break strikes. However, these two groups would come together in a massive strike effort in the table grape industry near Delano, California.

In 1965, California growers wanted to continue using bracero workers. Even though Congress had officially ended the program on December 31, 1964, they argued that a loophole in the McCarran Act allowed them to continue employing braceros since there was a shortage of labor. Pressure from California governor Pat Brown led the state to establish a pay rate for braceros at $1.40 an hour. Growers in southern California responded by turning to AWOC workers, but only offering to pay the largely Filipino migratory workforce $1.25. The AWOC responded by calling a strike, and growers who no longer had unlimited access to braceros capitulated. The strike then moved to Delano, where growers offered the Filipino migrants only $1.20 an hour. Inspired by the Mexican and Filipino grape pickers who had walked off the job in the southern part of the state that summer, AWOC members met at the Filipino Community Hall in Delano on September 8, 1965 and voted in favor of a strike in which workers refused to leave the labor camps (owned by growers) to work in the fields. The region around Delano was also home to many non-migrating Latino workers, who formed the core of the FWA. On September 9, these workers voted to join the AWOC strike, which led to the formation of a cross-ethnic alliance. Typical violence, intimidation, and wholesale evictions of strikers ensued, with little police protection afforded to the strikers.[112]

This time, however, circumstances were different. Farm workers' struggles were in the national spotlight, and the strikers received assistance from local labor union members, students, and civil rights activists, who joined the picket lines. Yet, despite this support, the leaders knew that the odds were against them. An excess of farm laborers coupled with the support of local law enforcement gave growers the upper hand, so the FWA did something new—they called for a consumer boycott of table grapes throughout the country. This gained widespread initial support, but to sustain it, the NFWA focused its efforts on two key companies: Schenley Industries and the DiGiorgio Corporation—two major agribusinesses in the region. Inspired by the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, in March and April of 1966 the FWA launched a 300 mile, twenty-five day march from Delano to the capitol building in Sacramento, which concluded at the terminus on Easter Sunday. Although inspired by American protests, Patrick Mooney and Theo Majka write, it "also combined themes of pilgrimage and penitence, building on the cultures and religious heritage of both Mexican and Filipino farm workers." Four days later, Schenley agreed to recognize the FWA, but the union would continue to struggle with

[110] Bardacke, Trampling Out the Vintage, 115-116.
[111] Bardacke, Trampling Out the Vintage, 114.
[112] Leigh Brown, "Forgotten Hero of Labor Fight"; Patrick H. Mooney and Theo J. Majka, *Farmers and Farm Workers' Movements: Social Protest in American Agriculture* (Twayne Publishers, 1995), 152-153, 155.

DiGiorgio. The boycott of table grapes continued into the summer of 1970 when, despite California governor Ronald Reagan's and President Nixon's condemnations and attempts to thwart the strike, the grape growers signed contracts with the United Farm Workers (UFW).[113] This did not mark the end of the UFW's struggles, but it also did not mark the end of the members' resolve.



Dolores Huerta stands with her United Farm Workers colleagues outside of a hiring hall in Florida, ca. 1980 *(photographer unknown, WPRL)*

Conclusion

Maybe because of its long duration, or because of its early success, or because of its connections to contemporary political and social movements and leaders, the UFW launched perhaps the most renowned efforts at organizing agricultural workers in the United States. Yet, as this chapter has intended to illustrate, this effort was part of a long history of agricultural agitation. What had begun as organizations among independent farmers to enhance their social, political, and economic well-being soon turned into a widespread movement to organize those who

[113] Mooney and Majka, *Farmers and Farm Workers' Movements*, 156-157, 163. The United Farm Workers went through several name changes. From 1962-1964 the organization was known as the Farm Workers Association. It became the National Farm Workers Association in 1964. In 1966 the name changed again to the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee in 1966, before becoming the United Farm Workers in 1972.

labored on farms—tenants, sharecroppers, migrant laborers, and stationary farm workers—who had little to no political or economic power. Some of these efforts came from outside the farming communities, largely through politically radical organizers who sought to unite low wage agricultural workers. Others were grassroots efforts led by workers themselves or organized by organic intellectuals, to use the Gramscian term, who came from these communities and worked to unite workers in the effort to improve their working and living conditions.

Like their industrial counterparts, agricultural workers were a multicultural group; they represented almost every racial and ethnic group that immigrated to America—either by choice or by force. They also covered almost every geographical area of the continental United States and its overseas states and territories. The story of agricultural labor in America is therefore a truly national story, and it continues to shape our society, economy, and culture well into the twenty-first century.



Meeting of agricultural workers organizing to protest discrimination against Black and foreign-born workers, Bridgeton, NJ, c. 1937 *(LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

EXTRACTIVE LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES[1]



Group of miners underground, 1910-1920 *(LOC P&P, Detroit)*

Extractive enterprise played a critical role in the economic development of the United States throughout the long period of industrialization that began in the early nineteenth century. Coal, and then petroleum, fueled the Industrial Revolution. Iron, copper, timber, and other natural resources served as indispensable raw materials for manufacturing, transportation, construction, and other sectors of the economy.

While extractive labor made American industrialization possible, the industry had a high human cost. Toiling in dangerous jobs, extractive workers suffered a high rate of premature death and disability from occupational injuries and illnesses. For example, in 1910 the typical hardrock miner in the United States was sixteen times more likely to be killed by a traumatic injury on the

[1] Alan Derickson, Professor of Labor Studies and History Emeritus at Pennsylvania State University, and Rachel Donaldson, Assistant Professor Of History at College of Charleston, prepared this context. Dr. Derickson specializes in the history of American labor, history of health policy, and occupational health. His books are *Black Lung: Anatomy of a Public Health Disaster* (Cornell University Press, 1998) and *Workers' Health, Workers' Democracy: The Western Miners' Struggle, 1891-1925* (Cornell University Press, 1988), which won the Philip Taft Labor History Award for best book of the year in the field. Dr. Donaldson has published on the cultural politics of the folk music revival. Her books include *"I Hear America Singing": Folk Music and National Identity, 1930-1970* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014) and (co-authored with Ronald D. Cohen) *Roots of the Revival: American and British Folk Music in the 1950s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014). She is a historian of labor and cultural history and a historic preservationist.

job than was the typical manufacturing employee.[2] Historians have illuminated extractive workers' efforts to prevent or mitigate occupational hazards to health and safety. Because no other type of work compares to extraction in terms of adverse working conditions, this sector affords a unique perspective on the tremendous price of industrialization in the United States.

The extractive industry also provides a window through which to explore the regional diversity of labor in America. By their very nature, extractive industries have always been tied to place. Geographical, geological, and climate conditions determined which extractive industries would develop in what locations. Various types of mining industries developed upon areas of great mineral deposits; the history of logging is directly connected to regions covered by forests; rich oil fields made the oil drilling industry possible. While the history of this industry is deeply rooted in place, it is also defined by temporality. When mineral and other underground resources became depleted, when all available timber in a region was logged, the industries and the workers moved on, leaving behind the mines, camps, and towns that they had created. While extractive industry may not have as many structural landmarks as other industries to tell its stories, the historical understanding of this working-class experience is often revealed through archeological remains. Industrial archeology therefore provides critical insight into the extractive experience of the United States, a history that is also detailed in the accompanying Labor Archeology theme study.

As with other industrial complexes, the sites of extractive labor constitute historical cultural landscapes. They lay at the nexus of natural and productive landscapes—mines, oil fields, and lumber camps are terrains that have been altered specifically for the purposes of exploiting natural resources, which render them prime examples of historic vernacular landscapes.[3] Industries, regardless of their duration at a particular location, left an indelible footprint on the environments they left behind. The stories of extractive work and the struggles of labor organizing, the communities that developed around these industries, and the environmental impacts that resulted from this labor, are at the core of American social, labor, and environmental history extending back to the early years of the United States.

Pre-Industrial Era and Self-Sufficiency Until 1840

In the pre-industrial era, much extractive work involved skill, both physical and mental. Mining required constant decision-making. Before there were engineers to locate mineral deposits and to guide the exploitation plans, ordinary men performed exploratory tasks and devised plans for extracting resources. Veterans of the Cornish tin mines immigrated to the United States throughout the nineteenth century to prospect for metalliferous ores and to oversee the pursuit of prospects underground. Coal diggers from Wales, Scotland, and England took similar initiatives in the bituminous and anthracite fields. Experienced petroleum workers from Pennsylvania

[2] US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Industrial Accident Statistics*, by Frederick L. Hoffman, Bulletin 157 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1915), 6.

[3] Charles A. Birnbaum, "Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment, and Management of Historic Landscapes," NPS Technical Preservation Brief 36, http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/36-cultural-landscapes.htm, September 1994.

assumed a leading role in identifying and tunneling to reach western oil deposits. These workers held the strategic power to decide where and even whether to commence operations.[4]

Once laborers selected a work site, they made judgments about how to proceed. Miners and loggers toiled at their own pace. They chose which tools to use and how to use them. Coal workers used hand tools—auger drills and picks—and blasting powder to bring down masses of coal. Hardrock workers likewise manipulated simple hand tools and explosive material to extract minerals. Lumberjacks decided at what height to take down a tree, which saws and axes to deploy, and in what direction the tree should fall. The builders of oil and gas rigs were similarly responsible for conceiving and realizing the rigs' particular shape and size. These decisions were never routine because environmental conditions varied. Extractive workers met one of the fundamental criteria for craft status: they regularly encountered unique situations that called for creative adaptation.[5]

Extractive workers found outlets for creative initiative, devising new tools or refining existing designs. Oil workers, for example, came up with improved connections between the drill pipe and the drill collar. The pre-industrial repertoire encompassed various maintenance functions. Miners spent a significant amount of time securing the roof of the underground cavity in which they labored. Roof maintenance included pulling down loose chunks of rock and propping the roof with timbers. Many workers sharpened and maintained saws, picks, and other tools.[6]

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[4] John Rowe, *The Hard-Rock Men: Cornish Immigrants and the North American Mining Frontier* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1974); Arthur C. Todd, *The Cornish Miner in America* (Truro, England: D. Bradford Barton, 1967); John H. M. Laslett, *Nature's Noblemen: The Fortunes of the Independent Collier in Scotland and the American Midwest, 1855-1899* (Los Angeles: UCLA, Institute of Industrial Relations, 1983); Herbert G. Gutman, "Labor in the Land of Lincoln: Coal Miners on the Prairie," in *Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class,* ed. Ira Berlin (New York: New Press, 1987), 117-212; Nancy L. Quam-Wickham, "Petroleocrats and Proletarians: Work, Class, and Politics in the California Oil Industry, 1917-1925" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1994), 68-70. On the exceptional lack of freedom in southern timber and turpentine extraction, see Jerrell H. Shofner, "Forced Labor in the Florida Forests, 1880-1950," *Journal of Forest History* 25 (1981): 14-25. For recent scholarship on southern timber workers, see Robert B. Outland, *Tapping the Pines: The Naval Stores Industry in the American South (*Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004.)

[5] Otis E. Young, Jr., *Black Powder and Hand Steel: Miners and Machines on the Old Western Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 30-40; Frank A. Crampton, *Deep Enough: A Working Stiff in the Western Mine Camps* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 22-25; Carter Goodrich, *The Miners' Freedom: A Study of the Working Life in a Changing Industry* (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1925), 15-100; Keith Dix, *Work Relations in the Coal Industry: The Hand-Loading Era, 1880-1930* (Morgantown: West Virginia University, Institute for Labor Studies, 1977), 1-16, 29-38, 42; Donald L. Miller and Richard E. Sharpless, *The Kingdom of Coal: Work, Enterprise, and Ethnic Communities in the Mine Fields* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 84-98; Perry K. Blatz, *Democratic Miners: Work and Labor Relations in the Anthracite Coal Industry 1875-1925* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 12-14; Daniel A. Cornford, *Workers and Dissent in the Redwood Empire* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 20-22; Richard W. Judd, *Aroostook: A Century of Logging in Northern Maine* (Orono: University of Maine Press, 1989), 115-21; Quam-Wickham, "Petroleocrats and Proletarians," 25-29.

[6] Quam-Wickham, "Petroleocrats and Proletarians," 15, 40-41, 31-32; Judd, *Aroostook*, 116; Dix, *Work Relations,* 74, 77, 101-2; John Brophy, *A Miner's Life,* ed. John O. P. Hall (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 37, 45; Alan Derickson, *Workers' Health, Workers' Democracy: The Western Miners' Struggle, 1891-1925* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 6, 58-59.

In maintenance tasks and in other ways, extractive workers displayed more than self-regard. Habits and ideals of mutual responsibility guided the behavior of workers at almost every turn. As a young coal loader, future unionist John Brophy learned the unequivocal demands for vigilance: "Loyalty to his fellow workers required a very alert awareness of danger every minute that he spent in the mine. Careless or selfish actions that endangered lives were unthinkable, and any miner who broke the safety rules was quickly made aware of the other men's disapproval." In this strictly sex-segregated sphere, such reciprocity fostered a deeply gendered solidarity. Malcolm Ross captured this solidarity as "a brotherhood among miners knit by an unspoken pact against the rock."[7]



***Pittsburgh Coal Company, Montour no. 4 mine** (L) **Drilling,** (R) **Mechanical loader filling mine car, Pittsburgh, PA vicinity, 1942** (John Collier, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

Industrial Advances and Occupational Hazards, 1840-1945

Industrialization in extraction advanced haltingly in the century after 1840. As in other sectors of the economy, the biggest force was the steam engine. In coal mining, the late nineteenth century watched steam-powered machinery undercut the working face to yield a larger and more controlled fall of coal. In hardrock mining and stone quarrying, the decades after 1870 saw the dissemination of steam drills for boring the holes into which explosive charges were placed. In oil and gas exploration, steam engines drove the drill bit into the ground. In logging, the sequence of industrialization was reversed. The central extractive task of felling trees long remained a manual job; on the other hand, haulage of felled trees using cables attached to a

[7] Brophy, *Miner's Life*, 41, 36-50; Malcolm Ross, *Death of a Yale Man* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1939), 31; Dix, *Work Relations*, 12, 16; Derickson, *Workers' Health*, 59-61; George M. Blackburn and Sherman L. Ricards, "Unequal Opportunity on a Mining Frontier: The Role of Gender, Race, and Birthplace," *Pacific Historical Review* 62 (1993): 19-38; Gunther Peck, "Manly Gambles: The Politics of Risk on the Comstock Lode, 1860-1880," *Journal of Social History* 26 (1993): 701-23. On manliness toward one's co-workers, see David Montgomery, "Workers' Control of Machine Production in the 19th Century," in *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 9-31, esp. 14-15.

stationary engine, the so-called donkey engine, came into common usage around the turn of the century.

Mechanization and the application of inanimate sources of power extended to additional operations. In mining, after many failed experiments, the mechanical loading of coal and other minerals yielded to engineering skill in the years after 1920. In the bituminous (soft coal) segment of the coal industry, the crucial breakthrough was the Joy loader, which displaced countless thousands of shoveling laborers. Similarly, locomotives moved an increasing share of the material thus loaded. In timber tracts, efficient (i.e., portable, lightweight, and durable) chainsaws came into widespread use in the 1940s.

These innovations had an impact on employees. Under some circumstances, the new tools and methods alleviated physical burdens that exhausted or disabled laborers. In other cases, technological advances caused bottlenecks that intensified work. In hardrock mining, for instance, the implementation of power drilling expedited the ore blasting, but the persistence of manual methods of loading broken ore meant that muckers had to work harder to keep pace. Moreover, mechanization in this period was incomplete, especially in smaller firms. So extractive work, for the most part, remained hard work.[8]

It also continued to be dangerous work. Over the course of industrialization, the general tendency toward occupational risks of injury and illness increased. Powerful, unfamiliar tools often did bodily damage to workers. With the advent of steam-powered overhead cable systems of conveyance, for example, log transportation through and over the work site increased mishaps. Technological experimentation came at the expense of employees' lives and limbs.[9]

The concomitant growth in the scale of operations meant greater hazards. Deeper mine shafts guaranteed death in the event of a fall or broken hoisting cable. Explosions and fires in larger mines claimed a larger number of victims. The first major catastrophe in coal occurred at the Steuben Shaft in Avondale, Pennsylvania, on September 6, 1869, when a fire trapped anthracite (hard coal) workers 300 feet underground in a mine with only one exit. Altogether, 110 perished including two rescue workers. Between 1870 and 1914, thirty-seven coal mine disasters each killed fifty or more workers. In the worst of these, 361 died in the explosion at Monongah Mines

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[8] Parsons, *Seventy-Five Years of Progress*; Mark Wyman, *Hard-Rock Epic: Western Miners and the Industrial Revolution, 1860-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 84-117; Young, *Western Mining*, 204-17; Arrell M. Gibson, *Wilderness Bonanza: The Tri-State District of Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 67-90; Anthony F. C. Wallace, *St. Clair: A 19th-Century Coal Town's Experience with a Disaster-Prone Industry* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 30-53; Dix, *Work Relations*,15ff; Keith Dix, *What's a Coal Miner to Do?: The Mechanization of Coal Mining* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988); Goodrich, *Miner's Freedom*, 103-82; Andrew M. Prouty, *More Deadly Than War!: Pacific Coast Logging, 1827-1981* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), 59-86; Ellis Lucia, "A Lesson from Nature: Joe Cox and His Revolutionary Saw Chain," *Journal of Forest History* 25 (1981): 158-65; Quam-Wickham, "Petroleocrats and Proletarians," 33ff; Lynch, *Roughnecks, Drillers*, passim; Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 27ff.

[9] Wyman, *Hard-Rock Epic*, 84-117; Dix, *Work Relations*, 6-71; Whiteside, *Regulating Danger*, 46; Prouty, *More Deadly Than War*, 87ff; William G. Robbins, "Labor in the Pacific S1ope Timber Industry: A 20th-Century Perspective," *Journal of the West* 25 (April 1986): 9-10, 12; Quam-Wickham, "Petroleocrats and Proletarians," 43.

6 and 8 in Fairmont, West Virginia, on December 6, 1907.[10] In Alabama mines, explosions of methane gas posed a constant threat, as did cave-ins of the underground pits. One particularly devastating explosion occurred in 1911 at the Pratt Consolidated Coal's Banner Mine near Littleton, Alabama, killing 132 workers. While large-scale incidents like this raised public awareness of the lack of safety in the mines, companies and law enforcement did little to regulate safety. An annual average of 109 men died every year during the 1920s.[11]



(L) ***Last message left by 47entombed miners in Argonaut gold mine, Jackson, CA, 1922*** *(W. Aird Macdonald, LOC P&P); (R)* ***Rockfall blocking entry to Turkey Knob Mine, Macdonald, WV, 1908*** *(Lewis Hine, LOC P&P, National Child Labor Committee collection)*

Speculator Mine Disaster

In metal mining, the biggest disaster occurred on June 8, 1917, at the Speculator Mine in Butte, Montana.[12] On that night, an accident 2,000 feet below the surface sparked a fire that spread throughout the Granite Mountain mineshaft, trapping over four hundred miners and killing 163.

[10] Considering the century of industrialization as a whole, the aggregate toll from traumatic injuries was enormous. Unfortunately, the data, especially for the nineteenth century and especially for nonfatal injuries, are incomplete. Many states collected no data on this phenomenon for decades; other states maintained statistical records that suffered from systemic underreporting, due to dependence on self-reporting by employers or the observations of overworked inspectors. Despite these limitations, government sources recorded more than 120,000 deaths from injury in mining, quarrying, and related mineral work for the interval 1870-1945. No similar national data set exists for timber, petroleum, and turpentine extraction. However, flawed state-level data offers a glimpse of the carnage in logging. During the period 1911-1945, more than 100 loggers per year died of workplace injuries in Washington.

[11] Robert H. Woodrum, "Everybody was Black Down There": Race and Industrial Change in the Alabama Coal Fields (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 19.

[12] Wallace, St. Clair, 296-302; William Graebner, Coal-Mining Safety in the Progressive Period: The Political Economy of Reform (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 1-15; US Bureau of Mines, Coal Mine Fatalities in the United States, 1915, by Albert H. Far (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1916), 39; James Whiteside, Regulating Danger: The Struggle for Mine Safety in the Rocky Mountain Coal Industry (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 73-77; Philip A. Kalisch, "The Woebegone Miners of Wyoming: A History of Coal Mine Disasters in the Equality State," Annals of Wyoming 42 (1970): 237-42; Noel Milan, "The Day 200 Miners Died 81 Years Ago," Mine Safety and Health, 11 (1969): 27-30; Derickson, Workers' Health, 34; Tom Janisse et al., "The Argonaut Mine Disaster," Volcano Review 3 (1981): 9-102.

While the Granite Mine Disaster is part of a long history of mining disasters, it also illustrates the social tensions that roiled the diverse communities in extractive labor during the WWI era.

By all accounts, Butte was a difficult place to live during the early twentieth century. Smoke from the giant smelters contained arsenic and sulfur, the latter of which caused the town to "smell like hell." Five slaughterhouses supplied the meat to feed the growing population, but the refuse of the industry was dumped into pits on the outside of town, causing an infestation of flies. The fly situation was only worsened by the open sewer pits, which further illustrated the general lack of city planning. Most of the industries of the city were hard labor, employing mainly men. One of the only avenues for women was in the sex trade—by 1917 Butte's red-light district allegedly employed almost one thousand women. Occasional vice raids aside, prostitution was openly acknowledged, and municipal leaders even tapped into the trade to fill the city's coffers, for prostitutes had to pay a licensing fee to the city on a monthly basis.[13]



Ancient Order of Hibernians (A.O.H.) Hall, Anaconda, MT, 1979 *(Jet Lowe, LOC P&P, HABS MT-53-U)*

Despite the harsh living conditions, the prevalence of jobs in the regional mines attracted both immigrants and migrants to the city. Butte had almost always been a pluralist community, beginning with the immigrants who supplied the labor for the large-scale silver mining ventures of the nineteenth century. The first immigrants to make Butte their new home were Irish Catholics. By 1900, first and second-generation Irish constituted 36 percent of the population in Silver Bow County, Montana, with 68 percent of that population working in the surrounding mines. As such, Butte became "the most overwhelmingly Irish city in the US." Most of the Irish lived in single-family homes or boarding houses in the Dublin Gulch or Corktown neighborhoods. Along with a smattering of Irish Catholic parishes, the Irish in Butte established several ethnically-based social clubs, religious organizations, and fraternal societies. These included three branches of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (each of which had a Ladies' Auxiliary) as well as a Gaelic League, a Gaelic Athletic Association, and the second largest

[13] Michael Punke, Fire and Brimstone: The North Butte Mining Disaster of 1917 (New York: Hyperion, 2006), 88, 93.

Clan-na-Gael camp in the country. Besides providing social and recreational opportunities, ethnic organizations like the Hibernians provided members with sick and death benefits as well as nursing care. They also helped members find jobs and, as such, became what historian Eric Hobsbawm identified as "informal unions."[14]

Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, the ethnic diversity of the city exploded. The first challenge to the dominance that the Irish maintained on the ethnic makeup of Butte came from an influx of three thousand single, male Eastern European immigrants.[15] Soon, Finns, Italians, Russians, and other immigrants from the Balkans joined this second wave. Like the Irish, many of the new immigrant groups established fraternal orders as well as religious and ethnic groups such as The Scandinavian Brotherhood and the Serbian Bocalian Brotherhood to aid in their countrypeople's transition to the area.

As with immigrants in other industrial areas, newcomers to Butte faced several challenges in adapting to their new living and working conditions. While many of the Irish and British miners had received training in mining work even before coming to the United States, the recent immigrants had no prior experience in the trade. Furthermore, the Butte mines lacked any training program to educate the new miners. This lack of knowledge, combined with an inability to speak English, led to several deaths on the first day on the job. Fears that the new immigrants posed a threat to their safety and would lower their wages and bargaining power led the established miners to see the newcomers as a threat. Ethnic tensions were further exacerbated by the political circumstances of WWI.

By the time of America's entry into the war, Butte was a multicultural society of European ethnicities, with each group holding different, and largely opposing, views of the war that corresponded to those of their home nations. Jingoism and nativism even shaded public opinion surrounding the events of the Granite Mine Disaster. The foreman in charge during the outbreak of the fire, Ernest Sullau, lost his life trying to warn workers about the fire and rescue trapped miners. While most local newspapers commended his efforts, a story broke out that the fire was an act of German sabotage directed by the Kaiser, a story that was fueled by Sullau's German surname.[16]

The ethnic pluralism of Butte was common throughout extractive communities—from small company-owned towns to large independent municipalities. The racial and ethnic makeup of the different labor forces would alter patterns of labor solidarity and organization in the industry from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries.

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[14] Quoted in David Emmons, "An Aristocracy of Labor: The Irish Miners of Butte, 1880-1914," *The Journal of Labor History* 28, no. 3 (Summer 1987): 281-83, 292.

[15] Emmons, "An Aristocracy of Labor," 292.

[16] An example that illustrates these views occurred during the official Registration Day for the draft on June 5, 1917. A group of anti-British Irish and socialist Finnish residents led a protest of almost 2,500 people. The demonstration soon turned into a riot between marchers and the police and National Guard members who were summoned to disperse the crowd (Punke, *Fire and Brimstone*, 5-7, 38).

Work-Induced Illness

Besides large-scale disasters, the other major threat extractive workers faced were work-induced illnesses. In the pre-industrial era, occupational disease appears to have been infrequent. In mining, technological changes across the industry led to elevated concentrations of hazardous dust. Power drills and cutting machinery stirred up respirable mineral particles. Underground coal and metal miners often reported dust so thick they could not see their hands held in front of their faces. In the ore-processing mills and anthracite breakers adjacent to many mines, employees were exposed to high levels of air contamination. More than any other group of workers, miners and mill workers became victims of the pneumoconioses, the chronic respiratory disorders caused by microscopic dust particles. Asbestos miners and millers contracted asbestosis. Hardrock workers and stone quarry workers suffered silicosis from inhaling such siliceous minerals as quartzite and granite.

Silicosis stemming from exposure to pure silica in industries such as granite cutting was a slow killer, and workers initially did not know of the dangers. In Vermont, granite cutting was one of the primary extractive industries, particularly in and around Barre. The granite in this region had an unusually high silica content. When labor activist and granite cutter Mose Cerasoli first entered the industry in 1914, the conditions were already bad. He later explained, “In the place where I worked it was almost evenly divided between Scotch and Italian, which are the predominant racial strains around Barre. And they would come over here, these immigrants, rosy cheeks, healthy, young, and in a few years, they were dead—and we didn’t know what was killing them.”[17] Eventually, it became clear that the workers were succumbing to silicosis.

In other circumstances, health dangers were readily apparent. During the early 1930s, the Union Carbide Corporation selected the path for a tunnel through Gauley Mountain not only to transport water, but also to exploit the deposits of pure silica within the mountain. Hence, digging the Hawk’s Nest Tunnel at Gauley Bridge, West Virginia, during 1930-1931 became the worst occupational health and safety disaster in American history. By conservative estimation, more than 700 employees—three-quarters of them African American—perished during this project. Dust doses were so intense that the normal gradual trajectory of this chronic disease was condensed; many expired after mere months of exposure, not decades. An unknown number of victims were buried in a farmer’s field near the mouth of the tunnel. Coal workers were victimized by silicosis from exposure to rock dust, but were more frequently disabled by coal workers’ pneumoconiosis, or black lung. Beyond the pneumoconiotic scarring of the lungs, other workers—notably miners of asbestos and uranium—incurred work-induced cancers.

Although the prevalence of occupational disease in the extractive sector remains unknown, evidence indicates that respiratory diseases alone disabled and killed far more employees than did all types of occupational trauma combined. The problem of work-induced illness only worsened between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries. In the early decades of the twentieth century, perhaps one-fifth of all hardrock miners had silicosis. The prevalence of pneumoconiosis in the coal industry prior to the mid-1960s is elusive, but evidence suggests that at least 10 percent of the active workforce may have suffered from this type of disorder. Despite

[17] Bernard Sanders, “Vermont Labor Agitator,” Interview with Mose Cerasoli, *Journal of Labor History* 15, no. 2 (Spring 1974): 262.

systematic attempts to trivialize the extent and severity of dust-induced disease, these maladies cut a swath through the extractive workforce during the era of industrialization.[18]



To create the Hawks Nest Tunnel, workers had to drill through nearly pure sandstone, which produced clouds of toxic silica dust. Workers in these photos are not wearing respirators — a requirement mandated by Congress after hundreds of men died from exposure to silica in the tunnel; *(L)* ***Drilling crew posing in tunnel;*** *(R)* ***Worker emerging from dust-filled tunnel, Hawks Nest Tunnel, Hawks Nest-Gauley Junction, WV, 1931*** *(West Virginia State Archives, Elkin Metals Collection)*

[18] Derickson, *Workers' Health, Workers' Democracy*, 39-53; Derickson, "Federal Intervention in the Joplin Silicosis Epidemic, 1911-1916," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 62 (1988): 236-51; David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz, *Deadly Dust: Silicosis and the Politics of Occupational Disease in 20th-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Wendy Richardson, "'The Curse of Our Trade': Occupational Disease in a Vermont Granite Town," *Vermont History* 60 (1992): 5-28; Martin Cherniack, *The Hawk's Nest Incident: America's Worst Industrial Disaster* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Alan Derickson, "Occupational Disease and Career Trajectory in Hard Coal, 1870-1930," *Industrial Relations* 32 (1993): 94-110; Howard Ball, *Cancer Factories: America's Tragic Quest for Uranium Self –Sufficiency* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993); US National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, *Occupational Respiratory Diseases* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1976), 222-23, 273-75, 305, 336-52; Keith Schneider, "Uranium Miners Inherit Dispute's Sad Legacy," *New York Times*, Jan. 9, 1990.



Company houses in coal town, Kempton, WV, 1939 *(John Vachon, LOC P&P, FSA-OWI)*

Company Towns

While working conditions were hard, extractive workers' living conditions were sometimes only slightly better. Beyond the exchange of labor for compensation, extractive employees became entangled in comprehensive, sometimes feudalistic, relations with employers. Because most work sites were isolated, often by rugged terrain, management assumed varied ancillary functions. Thousands of firms ran stores or rented housing for employees. From the southwestern oil patch boomtowns to the eastern coal camps, the characteristic form of company-provided domestic architecture was the "shotgun house." (The name derived from its simple design, which featured a central hall that ran the length of the building.) In addition to providing housing, many companies fed their workforce, particularly in the logging industry. Logging-camp cookhouses served three to five meals daily to dozens or sometimes hundreds of lumberjacks. Workers consumed a diet that averaged up to 9,000 calories per day. To supply its cookhouse, the Hammond Lumber Company in Sonoma, California, maintained its own farms, ranches, dairies, and slaughterhouses beginning in 1892. More commonly, the tasks of feeding, bathing, massaging, and nurturing fell to workers' wives or other female household members.

Many firms created company towns with privately owned schools, saloons, and other institutions in order to attract and retain a stable workforce. For instance, at the turn of the century, the

Calumet and Hecla Mining Company owned the water works, smelting works, docks, railroads, churches, schools, hospitals and practically all other community sites in the copper mining center of Calumet, Michigan.[19] Similarly, Windber, Pennsylvania, a coal community built in 1897 by Berwind-White Coal Mining Company, boasted a range of institutions. While some companies provided recreational and social opportunities through company baseball teams, the miners themselves developed social opportunities of their own. Miners in the Birmingham District of Alabama organized branches of fraternal orders such as the Knights of Pythias, Red Men, Masons, Odd Fellows, and Order of the Eastern Star to provide their own economic safety net and sense of community outside of the companies' control.[20]

In many ways, company towns illustrated the control that extractive employers maintained over workers' lives. Indeed, they often played crucial roles in the stories of bitter strikes throughout the early twentieth century. A common feature of these towns was the company store. In more remote towns, company stores were often the only places where miners and their families were able to purchase necessary items; in other towns, they were the only places miners and their families were *allowed* to purchase necessary items. The company stores in mining towns surrounding Birmingham, Alabama illustrate the complicated relationship workers had to company-owned stores. On the one hand, company stores served as the social, as well as commercial, hub for miners and their families. In the town of Edgewater, for example, the company store also functioned as the post office and had a stand where miners could purchase soda, candy, cigarettes, and ice cream. As such, the Edgewater company store became the place where miners and their families gathered to socialize. On the other hand, mining companies created a situation in which miners were constantly in debt to the store by delaying their pay for the first several weeks of employment. This forced the miners to take advances on their checks, advances that could only be redeemed at the company store. [21] In so doing, companies created a situation in which miners and their families lived in a constant cycle of debt; the line in Merle Travis's song, "Sixteen Tons"—"Saint Peter don't you call me 'cause I can't go / I owe my soul to the company store"—rang true for many residents of mining company towns.

Oftentimes, the distribution of services and placement of facilities in company towns reflected and reaffirmed racial segregation. In southern states like Alabama, although African American and White miners worked together underground, segregation dominated their lives above ground—workers cleaned up in separate bathhouses and all of the company housing in towns around Birmingham was racially segregated, as were schools and other company-operated facilities and programs. Company stores served to reinforce the strict racial codes by maintaining separate checkout lines. Sometimes companies went to extreme measures to ensure that African Americans and Whites did not encounter each other in daily life. In the town of Docena, Alabama, which the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company (TCI) owned and operated, the 2,700 African American residents greatly outnumbered the 500 White ones. In the center of town, TCI constructed a plaza, to which the houses for White families were situated the closest; houses for African American families were constructed farthest from the center plaza. Company officials even tried to keep Black residents out of the White section by directing them to only walk

[19] See Alison K. Hoagland, *Mine Towns: Buildings for Workers in Michigan's Copper Country* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
[20] Robert H. Woodrum, *"Everybody was Black Down There,"* 37.
[21] Woodrum, "Everybody was Black Down There," 33, 37.

through “their streets” when going to and from their homes, rather than using the streets in the White section of town. Companies like TCI used White company guards that the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Department deputized to enforce company rules, maintain racial segregation, and regulate behavior. Guards could, under company directives, evict miners and their families from their rented homes with only a day’s notice. Christine Cochran, an African American former resident, recounted that company guards would whip miners and their families—children and adults—for various infractions, and if the victim protested or resisted, the guards would “just kill you right then.”[22]



Guard at company town, Jefferson County, AL, 1937 *(Arthur Rothstein, LC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

Patterns of segregation also applied to various ethnic groups and extended far beyond the South. New Almaden, California, site of the New Almaden Mine, exhibited segregation in the mid-nineteenth century. At the Quicksilver Mining Company near San Jose, California, which produced one third of the nation’s mercury in the century after it opened in 1846, separate schools and hospitals served the “Spanish camp” and the “English camp” by 1860. In occupations that employed a multiethnic workforce, residential segregation became commonplace. When the US Immigration Commission investigated the housing and working conditions that immigrants experienced in the bituminous coal industry in 1911, it not only observed patterns of segregation that fell along ethnic lines, but also saw that the quality of the housing varied according to each group. Housing for White workers was the best, followed by homes for European immigrants, and then African Americans; the houses for Mexican Americans were among the worst. Subtle divisions even occurred within these groups. For

[22] Woodrum, “Everybody was Black Down There,” 21-22, 24, 28, 33.

instance, the same investigation revealed that in the town of Colver, Pennsylvania, housing for immigrants from the British Isles was superior to the housing for workers from Southern and Eastern Europe.[23] In the most extreme manifestation of segregation, the turpentine camps in Georgia and Florida employed *only* African American workers. With the abolition of slavery, turpentine firms used the company store (together with the criminalization of indebtedness), convicts, and other methods to maintain an unfree Black labor force.[24]

[23] Margaret Mulrooney, "A Legacy of Coal: The Coal Company Towns of Southwestern Pennsylvania," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 4 (1991): 133-34.

[24] *Mining and Scientific Press*, May 13, 1899, 509; Joseph R. Conlin, "Old Boy, Did You Get Enough of Pie?," *Journal of Forest History* 23 (1979): 164-85; Heber Blankenhorn, *The Strike for Union: A Study of the Non-Union Question in Coal and the Problems of a Democratic Movement* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1924), 19-21, 258-59; Priscilla Long, *Where the Sun Never Shines: A History of America's Bloody Coal Industry* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 42-43, 78-83; Larry Lankton, *Cradle to Grave: Life, Work, and Death at the Lake Superior Copper Mines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 142-218; James B. Allen, *The Company Town in the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966); Allen, "The Company-Owned Mining Town in the West: Exploitation or Benevolent Paternalism?," in *Reflections of Western Historians*, ed. John A. Carroll (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1969), 177-97; Daniel C. Fitzgerald, "'We Are All in This Together'—Immigrants in the Oil and Mining Towns of Southern Kansas, 1890-1920," *Kansas History* 10 (1987): 17-28; Crandall A. Shifflett, *Coal Towns: Life, Work, and Culture in Company Towns of Southern Appalachia, 1880-1960* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991); Cornford, *Workers and Dissent*, 24-26, 99-115; Henry W. Splitter, "Quicksilver at New Almaden," *Pacific Historical Review* 26 (1957): 33-49, esp. 46, 48; James F. Fickle, "Race, Class, and Radicalism: The Wobblies in the Southern Lumber Industry, 1900-1916," in *At the Point of Production: The Local History of the I.W.W.*, ed. Joseph R. Conlin (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), 98, 101; Shofner, "Forced Labor in Florida Forests," 14-25; Shofner, "Postscript to the Martin Tabert Case: Peonage as Usual in the Florida Turpentine Camps," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 59 (1981): 161-73; Thomas F. Armstrong, "The Transformation of Work: Turpentine Workers in Coastal Georgia, 1865-1901," *Labor History* 25 (1984): 518-32. On social and cultural life in communities not dominated by a particular company, see Ralph Mann, *After the Gold Rush: Society in Grass Valley and Nevada City, California, 1849-1870* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982); Katherine A. Harvey, *The Best-Dressed Miners: Life and Labor in the Maryland Coal Region, 1835-1910* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969); Wallace, *St.Clair*. For a company town that minimized racial separation and inequality, see Dorothy Schwieder, Joseph Hraba, and Elmer Schwieder, *Buxton: Work and Racial Equality in a Coal Mining Community* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1987) and Janice A. Beran, "Diamonds in Iowa: Blacks, Buxton, and Baseball," *Journal of Negro History* 75 (1990): 81-95.



Detail of United Mine Workers membership certificate, 1900 *(LOC P&P)*

Unions

Occupational hazards, economic insecurity, and managerial treatment were among the major forces that led extractive workers to organize for self-protection. Increasingly, employees looked to collective strength, not individual virtue, as the way to overcome the imbalance of power between labor and capital. Coal workers first organized in the anthracite district of Pennsylvania in 1849, in opposition to low pay and high prices at the company store. The first hardrock union emerged in the silver mines of the Comstock Lode of Nevada in 1863. Although both these efforts failed, durable local foci of unionism emerged after 1870. In particular, the copper miners' organization in Butte, Montana, founded in 1878, grew into a formidable stronghold. By the turn of the century, this union had more than 6,000 members, making it the largest local union in the United States.

The miners of Butte, however, were not the only ones to demand union representation in the hardrock and metal mines of the North. Iron ore mining in the region around Lake Superior initially began in northern Michigan and Wisconsin, but it shifted to Minnesota in the 1890s with the opening of the Mesabi Range. Soon, Minnesota began to produce more than both Michigan and Wisconsin through open pit and underground mines. Controlled entirely by the Oliver Iron Mining Company, a subsidiary of US Steel, the "Oliver," as it was known, operated mines on the Mesabi and Vermillion ranges in addition to owning railroads as well as a fleet of lake ships. It also established several company towns, with a total population of 50,000 by 1910. With the increasing demand for miners, immigrants from Scandinavia, Slovakia, Finland, and Italy made these industrial communities their homes. Even incorporated municipalities like Virginia, Hibbing, Chisholm, and Eveleth benefitted from the economic boom of the mines.

The workers in these towns developed a strong working-class consciousness that often reflected political identities rooted in immigrant workers' ethnic heritage. "Every town of any size," historian Donald G. Sofchalk notes, "had a workers' hall where miners and their families danced, attended plays, listened to lectures (on temperance and socialism), and gathered for political rallies." The Finns in particular developed a working-class political outlook that drew in part from their ethnic traditions, but that was also shaped by the conditions in the iron mines. To promote their political and labor agenda, the Finns relied on their foreign language associations as well as their ethnic halls. During a strike in 1907, these halls served as headquarters for the labor activists. The socialist halls that they built, or which they bought and adapted to suit their purposes, became the centers for union activity. Two years prior to the strike, in 1905, Finnish workers combined their ethnic heritage and political sympathies by establishing the Finnish Socialist Federation in Hibbing to preserve their cultural traditions while also remaining connected to political sympathizers in their new home.[25]

Mining areas in the Deep South did not have the kind of ethnic culture of protest that marked the mining communities in the North, but southern miners were able to tap into a native-born radical tradition that dated back to the late nineteenth century. Many of the leading African American labor activists had gotten their political start as organizers for the Greenback-Labor Party in the 1870s. While the Greenback movement did not last long, African American and White miners again united through the Knights of Labor in the 1880s. During the following decade, after the Knights' collapse, miners of both races joined forces once more under the United Mine Workers of Alabama, which lasted until a bitter, failed strike in 1894. Afterward, miners again united under the umbrella of the United Mine Workers of America, with varying degrees of success. These organizations, besides contributing to the narrative of labor history in the South, also provide critical insight into the racial complexities in a region marked by racial violence and discriminatory laws. Although not all members shed the racial prejudices common to the era, historian Daniel Lewtin argues that through their "very existence as racially mixed enterprises, these associations stood as conspicuous and, to many, unnerving exceptions to the rising tide of Jim Crow."[26]

Defense of workers' interests meant national, not merely local or regional, organization. Organizing on a broadly inclusive industrial basis was necessary in a time of craft dilution and peril. With the formation of the Granite Cutters International Association in 1877, the first permanent national union arose in the extractive sector. In January 1890, representatives of Appalachian and Midwestern coal diggers met at City Hall in Columbus, Ohio, to establish the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA or UMW), which was affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Three years later, hardrock workers convened in Butte to organize the Western Federation of Miners (WFM). The driving force in the new federation, the Butte Miners' Union became WFM Local 1 and allowed its hall to be used as the group's headquarters.

The UMW would become a premiere union for miners in America. One of its founders, who would lead the organization into the twentieth century, was William B. Wilson. Born in a

[25] Donald G. Sofchalk, "Organized Labor and the Iron Ore Miners of Northern Minnesota, 1907-1936," *Journal of Labor History* 12, no. 2 (1971): 217-219, 222-23.
[26] Daniel Lewtin, *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism: Alabama Coal Miners, 1878-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 1-2.

coal-mining family in Scotland in 1862, Wilson grew up in the company village of Arnot, Pennsylvania. His father's disability from "miners' asthma" (black lung) and other work-induced afflictions forced Wilson to take a mining job at the age of nine. By age fourteen, he was secretary of a local affiliate of the Miners' and Laborers' Benevolent Association; by eighteen, he had been barred from the mines of central Pennsylvania as an agitator. During much of the 1880s, Wilson recruited coal workers into the Knights of Labor. In this capacity, he drew no salary and often did not even recover travel expenses. In 1890, Wilson helped found the UMW. As president of UMW District 2 in the 1890s, he continued organizing work and, in consequence, continued to be arrested and hounded for his efforts. In 1896, Wilson purchased a small farm near Blossburg, Pennsylvania, a few miles from Arnot. For years, he and his family worked the farm and resided in a plain, one-story clapboard house. This house and barn gave refuge to union supporters evicted from company housing. The house also provided a haven for labor organizer Mother Jones when she came to the aid of local strikers in the winter of 1899-1900.

In 1906, Wilson won election to Congress, defeating a Republican millionaire incumbent. Son of a discarded worker, Wilson knew the nation's poorhouses were full of old, worn-out workers and that voluntary retirement was virtually unknown to the working class. Accordingly, in 1909, he introduced the first proposal for a federal old-age pension plan. The former child laborer worked with Progressive reformers to pass legislation establishing the Children's Bureau in the Department of Commerce and Labor to press for prohibitive legislation and other protections for the youngest members of the workforce. Wilson promoted the establishment of a cabinet-level federal labor agency. In 1913, President Woodrow Wilson created the US Department of Labor and appointed William Wilson as its first secretary. In this position, Wilson, who was not only the son of an occupational disease victim, but a victim of black lung himself, sponsored numerous federal investigations of industrial health hazards. In addition, his administration created the Conciliation Service, forerunner of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, and helped lay the groundwork for the Women's Bureau established in 1920.[27]

[27] *United Mine Workers' Journal*, March 1, 1963, 6, 18-20; Roger W. Babson, *W. B. Wilson and the Department of Labor* (New York: Brentano's, 1919), 19, 61-64, 122-25, 140-43, 174-78, 187-94; Herbert G. Gutman, "Two Lockouts in Pennsylvania, 1873-1874," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 83 (1959): 307-26; Paul W. Pritchard, "William B. Wilson, Master Workman," *Pennsylvania History* 12 (1945): 81-108; Brophy, *Miner's Life*, 71-73; Jones, *Autobiography*, 31-39; Fox, *United We Stand*, 63; Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 214-16, 418-19; John Lombardi, *Labor's Voice in the Cabinet: A History of the Department of Labor from Its Origin to 1921* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942); Walter I. Trattner, *Crusade for the Children: A History of the National Child Labor Committee and Child Labor Reform in America* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 98; US Department of Labor, *The Anvil and the Plow: A History of the United States Department of Labor* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1963), 3-38. For other manifestations of incomplete proletarianization and its influence on extractive workers' capacity to struggle against their employers, see Green, "Brotherhood of Timber Workers," 177; Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion*, 33-35. In timber and petroleum, early attempts to forge national institutions failed. It took the surge of organizing of the 1930s to found the Oil Workers International Union (predecessor of today's Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers International Union) and the International Woodworkers of America. See Coleman, *Men and Coal*, 53ff; Maier B. Fox, *United We Stand: The United Mine Workers of America, 1890-1990* (Washington, D.C.: UMWA, 1990), 22-29; Jon Amsden and Stephen Brier, "Coal Miners on Strike: The Transformation of Strike Demands and the Formation of a National Union," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7 (1977): 583-616; Lingenfelter, *Hardrock Miners*, 219-24; Jerry Lembcke and William M. Tattam, *One Union in Wood: A Political History of the International Woodworkers of America* (New

Extractive unions did more than bargain over economic issues. Health and safety concerns drove a search for preventive measures. Beginning in 1911, the WFM won passage of state laws requiring wet methods of dust control. Labor led the fight for the extension of workers' compensation coverage to pneumoconiosis and other industrial diseases in the hope that social insurance would not only aid the disabled but also create the financial incentive for hazard abatement. In 1941, the UMW negotiated the establishment of union safety committees, an unprecedented institutionalization of rank-and-file activism for self-protection. To prevent workplace injuries, unions pressed for the enactment of mine safety codes and for strict enforcement. To prevent occupational illnesses, unions sought legislation mandating ventilation or dust-suppression technology.[28]

Because injury and illness were a constant reality of extractive labor, unions undertook ambitious mutual-aid programs. Miners' unions sent visiting committees to assist sick and injured members, especially bachelors, beginning in the 1860s. Locals arranged for nursing and physician services as an alternative to employer-controlled health care. For example, the Granite Cutters' branch in Barre, Vermont sponsored a silicosis clinic in its Socialist Labor Party Hall in the 1920s. Many groups built their own hospitals to serve the general public. In 1906, timber and sawmill workers led the campaign to found the Union Labor Hospital in Eureka, California. Beginning in 1891, more than twenty WFM and UMW locals established hospitals. An example was the Miners' Hospital in Park City, Utah, founded by Western Federation Local 144 in 1904, over the strenuous opposition of paternalistic mine owners in this silver-mining camp. The mutual-aid endeavors of these unions distinguish them from labor organizations in other sectors of the economy. At the same time, these ventures exemplify the traditions of grassroots self-help among North American working people.[29]

Organized extractive workers contributed to community development in other ways as well. Union halls served the general public, hosting town meetings, theatrical performances, boxing matches, and other events. The library of the Virginia City Miners' Union made its holdings available to the reading public; this was the largest collection of books in Nevada for many

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York: International Publishers, 1984), 1lff; Earl B. White, "The IWW and the Mid-Continent Oil Field," in *American Labor in the Southwest: The First One Hundred Years*, ed. James C. Foster (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982), 65-85; George N. Green, "Labor in the Western Oil Industry," *Journal of the West* 25 (1986)" 14-16; O'Connor, *History of Oil Workers*, 1-39.

[28] Alan Derickson, "Participative Regulation of Hazardous Working Conditions: Safety Committees of the United Mine Workers of America, 1941-1969," *Labor Studies Journal* 18 (1993): 25-38; Derickson, *Workers' Health*, 155-88; Wyman, *Hard-Rock Epic*, 186ff; Rosner and Markowitz, *Deadly Dust*, 39-43, 146-65; Alexander Trachtenberg, *History of Legislation for the Protection of Coal Miners in Pennsylvania, 1824-1915* (New York: International Publishers, 1942), 136ff; Quam-Wickham, "Petroleocrats and Proletarians," 297; Alan Derickson, "The United Mine Workers of America and the Recognition of Occupational Respiratory Diseases, 1902-1968," *American Journal of Public Health* 81 (1991): 782-85; James C. Foster, "The Western Dilemma: Miners, Silicosis, and Compensation," *Labor History* 26 (1985): 268-87; Foster, "Western Miners and Silicosis: 'The Scourge of the Underground Toiler,' 1890-1943," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 37 (1984): 371-85. Five of the eleven organizational goals enumerated in the preamble to the first UMW constitution dealt with matters of occupational health and safety. See Fox, *United We Stand*, 23-25.

[29] Richardson, "'Curse of Our Trade,'" 17; Cornford, *Workers and Dissent*, 145, 159; Gutman, "Labor in the Land of Lincoln," 124, 130-31; Alan Derickson, "From Company Doctors to Union Hospitals: The First Democratic Health-Care Experiments of the United Mine Workers of America," *Labor History* 33 (1992): 325-42; Derickson, *Workers' Health*, 57-154, 214; Wyman, *Hard-Rock Epic*, 178-86; Malcolm J. Rohrbaugh, *Aspen: The History of a Silver-Mining Town, 1879-1893* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 198.

years. For decades, the Butte miners' hall was a staging site for the festivities surrounding Miners' Union Day, June 13, a general holiday not only in Butte, but in mining camps across the northern Rockies. The Butte hall had its own bar, which offered an alternative to commercial drinking establishments.[30]



(L) ***Union Hall, Superior, WY, 1991*** *(Val Brinckerhoff, LOC P&P, HABS WY-110)*
(R) ***Miner's Union Hall, Virginia City, NV, 1937*** *(Robert Kerrigan LOC P&P, HABS NEV-15-20)*

The self-help initiatives of local and district mining unions encompassed ventures into workers' education. Knights of Labor organizers considered the education of workers on fundamental issues of political economy essential. Local activists in the WFM organized socialist study groups and sponsored lectures by leading troublemakers. In District 2 of the UMW, John Brophy developed his own extensive program of Labor Chautauquas and sent rank-and-file coal diggers to learn about labor organizing at the Brookwood Labor College near Katonah, New York, in the 1920s. The district held its first Chautauqua session on August 12, 1924, in a park in Six Mile Run, Pennsylvania. Speakers at these meetings advocated nationalization of the coal industry and denounced the Ku Klux Klan, which flourished at that time in central Pennsylvania. Like other labor groups, Brophy's organization published its own newspaper.[31] Occasionally, groups with opposing views on how best to organize disagreed about how to educate workers. For instance,

[30] Derickson, *Workers' Health*, 12-13, 74-76; Green, "Labor in Western Oil," 17; Ralph Chaplin, *The Centralia Conspiracy* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1973), 24-31, 51-52; Lingenfelter, *Hardrock Miners*, 53-54, 132, 133, 186-88, 194. On the cultural and ideological complexities of the working-class community in Butte, see Michael Malone, *The Battle for Butte: Mining and Politics on the Northern Frontier* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981); Jerry W. Calvert, *The Gibraltar: Socialism and Labor in Butte, Montana, 1895-1920* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1988); David M. Emmons, *Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 200. On the manifold functions of drinking places in extractive communities, see Elliott West, *The Saloon on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979); Wallace, *St. Clair*, 164-67.

[31] Alan Singer, "John Brophy's Miners' Program': Workers' Education in UMWA District 2 during the 1920s," *Labor Studies Journal* 13 (1988): 50-64; Derickson, *Workers' Health*, 21-22; Cornford, *Workers and Dissent*, 82-88.

the disputes over craft-based versus industrial-based unionism that roiled the national labor movement divided the members of the Finnish Socialist Federation. The problem became particularly acute when the politically radical members began using the Work People's College in Duluth as a means for teaching about industrial unionism, angering their reformist, craft-based compatriots.[32] This type of education made extractive workers aware of their exploitation by corporate employers and of their potential to resist exploitation collectively.

Conflict has characterized labor-management relations in extraction since the arrival of the corporation. Routine disputes over wages, hours, working conditions, and union rights often escalated into violence. During the quarter-century beginning in 1881, for example, coal mining had more strike activity than any other US industry. Commonly concentrated in remote locales as "isolated masses," extractive laborers have provided the model for the classic formulation of the militant proletarian, highly predisposed to strike.[33]

[32] Sofchalk, "Organized Labor and the Iron Ore Miners of Northern Minnesota," 222.

[33] P. K. Edwards, *Strikes in the United States, 1881-1974* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 99, 106, 108-9; Amsden and Brier, "Coal Miners on Strike," esp. 602-6; Clark Kerr and Abraham Siegel, "The Inter-Industry Propensity to Strike—an International Comparison," in *Industrial Conflict,* eds. Arthur W. Kornhauser, Robert Dubin, and Arthur M. Ross (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 189-212. For some of the earliest disputes between labor and capital in this sector, see Grace Palladino, *Another Civil War: Labor, Capital, and the State in the Anthracite Regions of Pennsylvania, 1840-68* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Lingenfelter, *Hardrock Miners*; Gutman, "Labor in the Land of Lincoln."



Group of striking union miners and their families living in tents, Lick Creek, WV, 4/12/1922 *(LOC P&P)*

ORGANIZE!

While the extractive industries included many skilled positions that offered higher wages, much of the rank-and-file work was on the spectrum of low wage labor. Like low wage workers in other industries, extractive workers' only source of recourse against unfair labor practices was their ability to work. As such, strikes, or work stoppages, became a major tactic that unions—especially more radically inclined ones—employed when companies refused to accommodate workers' demands or allow national (and regional) unions into their industries. Yet, at the same time, the lower-skilled nature of some facets of extractive labor made the workers vulnerable to strikebreaking tactics such as the importation of scab labor to keep mines and mills running. Despite this threat, strikes became an almost ubiquitous feature in two key extractive industries: mining and timber. From the late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century, strikes broke out in almost every region that these industries dominated. As responses to problems of particular industries in specific regions, strikes provide insight into regionally specific labor and social conditions. At the same time, the shared grievances that led laborers to walk off the job reveal problems common among workers in similar industries across the United States. In fact, many of the workers' demands, particularly those focusing on hours, wages, and safety concerns, mirrored those of strikers in various forms of extractive work as well as in other industrial sectors. Examining the issues of major strikes in the industry provides a better understanding of

the nature of extractive labor as well as insight into the struggles of the American labor movement as a whole.

Uprisings in the Coal Mines of the North and Southeast

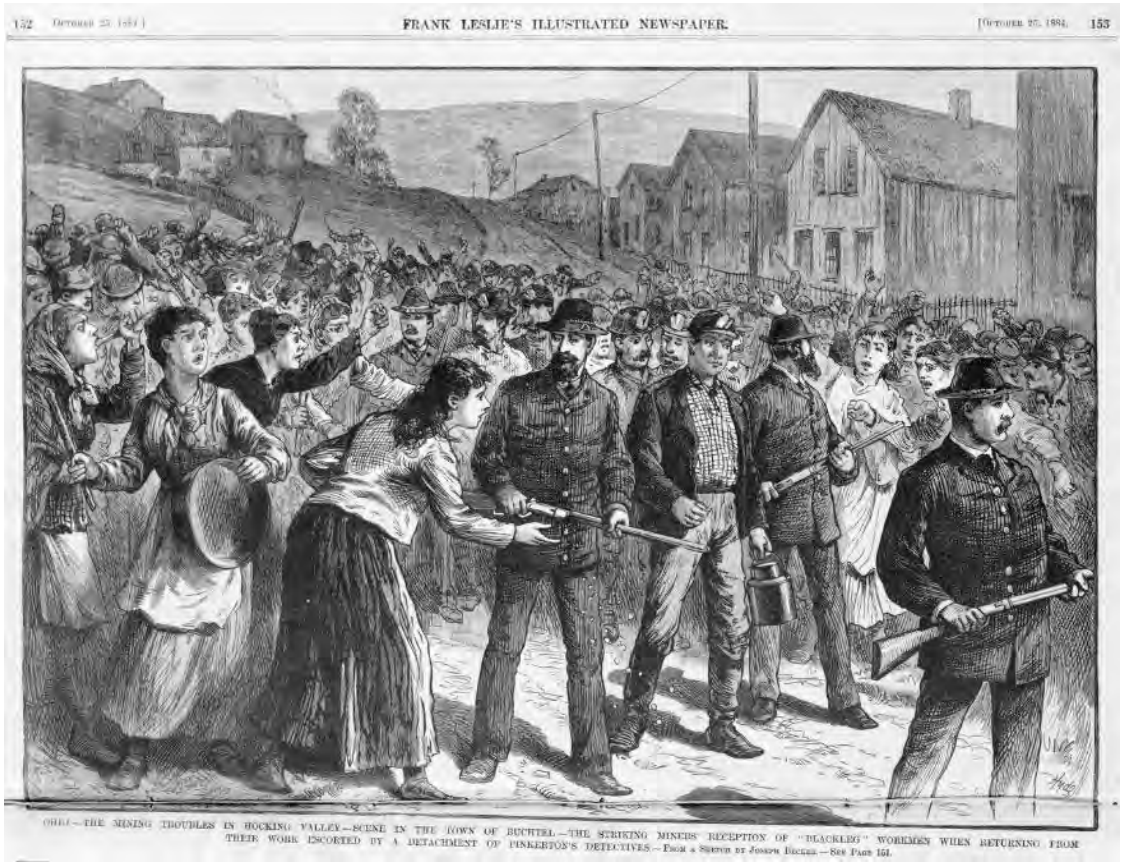
In the states stretching from Pennsylvania down through Alabama, the most prevalent form of extractive work was mining in the bituminous and anthracite coalfields. Efforts to organize the mines of this industry began during the nineteenth century and continued throughout the twentieth century. In fact, the industry became infamous for long, and often violent, strikes and the dedicated organizers that helped to lead them, perhaps the most famous of whom was Mother Jones.

A freelance organizer and agitator for half a century, Mother Jones devoted most of her energies to miners' struggles. In 1891, at the age of sixty-one, Mary Harris Jones, an Irish immigrant widow, ventured into her first coal diggers' strike, in Norton, Virginia. Like other early industrial disputes, this one involved a contest over control of space. The coal operators in southwestern Virginia sought to abrogate rights of free speech and free association by denying the UMW any place to meet. As on other occasions in company towns or community settings in which employers held such power, the union found a way to exercise its civil liberties by meeting on territory outside the mine owners' control. Unable to afford land and a hall, the miners' organization lay claim to public space. As Mother Jones did on other occasions, she addressed large gatherings of miners on state property alongside the road that passed through Norton. Her actions exemplified her courage and defiance of corporate autocracy. They show her tendency to challenge unorganized workers to make a display of their solidarity by literally standing up in public for the union. In contrast, twelve years later when Jones made a foray into the West Virginia coalfields, threats necessitated stealth. She held meetings "in the woods at night, [and] in abandoned mines." Reliance on such tactics offers insight into the precarious status of poor, overmatched labor organizations.[34]

Mother Jones mobilized women to act collectively in strikes and organizing campaigns. A clever manipulator of the gender conventions of her time, Jones knew that company guards were less likely to act violently when women were present. Accordingly, she instigated audacious challenges to public authority and private power on picket lines. In the Arnot strike of 1899-1900, she contrived a plan to disperse strikebreakers: "I told the men to stay home with the children for a change and let the women attend to the scabs." Rather than command the operation herself, Jones encouraged one miner's wife to take the lead and others to help force a confrontation at the entrance to the Drip Mouth Mine: "Take that dishpan you have with you and your hammer, and when the scabs and the mules come up, begin to hammer and howl. Then all of you hammer and howl and be ready to chase the scabs with your mops and brooms." This strategy proved effective; the pot-banging commotion frightened the mine mules, and the

[34] Jones, *Autobiography*, 24-27, 63; Dale Fetherling, *Mother Jones, the Miners' Angel: A Portrait* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974), 16, 30, 32, 40, 41, 65, 87-88, 90; Long, *Sun Never Shines*, 269, 278. For open-air gatherings not involving Mother Jones, see Brophy**,** *Miner's Life*, 72-73; Blankenhorn, *Strike for Union*, 20-21, 258-59; Singer, "Brophy's Miners' Program," 61; James R. Green, "The Brotherhood of Timber Workers, 1910-1913: A Radical Response to Industrial Capitalism in the Southern U.S.A.," *Past and Present* 60 (1973): 180-81; Reed, "Lumberjacks and Longshoremen," 49.

replacement workers bolted from the mine. The traditional symbols of domesticity and the status of homemakers served well in class combat.[35]



Pinkerton detectives protecting replacement workers from crowd during miners' strike in Buchtel, Ohio, from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, October 24, 1884 *(LOC P&P)*

Jones found other ways to destabilize gender roles. For example, she showed neither respect for the traditional superstition that women brought disaster if allowed inside a mine nor regard for ladylike propriety with language. John Brophy recalled his initial encounter with her at the turn of the century: "She came into the mine one day and talked to us in our workplace in the vernacular of the mines. How she got in I don't know, probably just walked in and defied anyone to stop her." Brophy remembered her as someone who "would take a drink with the boys and

[35] Jones, *Autobiography*, 34-35, 90-91, 202; Fetherling, *Mother Jones*, 41; Long, *Sun Never Shines*, 279-86. For other instances of women's mobilization**,** see Harvey, *The Best-Dressed Miners*, 292-93; Ann Schofield, "An 'Army of Amazons': The Language of Protest in a Kansas Mining Community, 1921-22," *American Quarterly* 37 (1985): 686-701; Schofield, "The Women's March: Miners, Family, and Community in Pittsburg, Kansas, 1921-1922," *Kansas History* 7 (1984): 159-68; Papanikolas, *Buried Unsung: Louis Tikas and the Ludlow Massacre* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1982), 171-73; Gutman, "Labor in the Land of Lincoln," 152-53, 170-71, 186, 190; Quam-Wickham, "Petroleocrats, and Proletarians," 222ff. For women' s mobilization that was hamstrung by gender bias, see Elizabeth Jameson, "Imperfect Unions: Class and Gender in Cripple Creek, 1894-1904," in *Class, Sex, and the Woman Worker*, eds. Milton Cantor and Bruce Laurie (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977), 166-202. For an incident in which wives of non-striking miners intervened to ward off strike pickets, see Harvey, *Best-Dressed Miners*, 283-85.

spoke their idiom, including some pretty rough language when she was talking about the bosses.[36]

Upon her death in 1930, Mother Jones was buried in the Union Miners Cemetery in Mount Olive, Illinois. She had selected this site, the only union cemetery in the United States at that time, because it was the place of interment of four victims of the Virden Massacre of October 12, 1898, a pivotal event in the unionization of the southern Illinois coal region. For half a century afterward, thousands of miners converged on Mount Olive on the anniversary of the massacre to honor the sacrifices that had founded their organization. At the memorial activities in 1936, a sizable granite monument was dedicated to Jones, honoring her self-sacrifice and undying dedication to her fellows. It embodied the mutual ethos of extractive workers who knew that they depended on co-workers not only for survival but also for consolation.[37]

The mutual ethos in the extractive industry was especially strong because workers relied on each other for ensuring a safe workspace. This kind of dependency required workers, particularly those who labored in integrated spaces, to transcend ethnic and racial divisions. Although hardly free from the social prejudices that pervaded American society, extractive unions made pioneering advances toward multiracial organizing. The western hardrock organizations, especially under the banner of the IWW, recruited Mexican-American laborers and Asian immigrants. In organizing African Americans, the United Mine Workers (UMW) led the way in many respects. By 1900, the UMW had approximately 20,000 Black members, making it one of the largest biracial organizations in an increasingly segregated society.[38]

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[36] Brophy, *Miner's Life*, 74; Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion*, 89-95; Fetherling, *Mother Jones*, 134-48; Jones, *Autobiography*.

[37] John H. Keiser, "The Union Miners Cemetery at Mt. Olive, Illinois: A Spirit-Thread of Labor History," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 62 (1969): 229-66; Archie Green, *Only a Miner: Studies in Recorded Coal-Mining Songs* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 241-77; Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion*, 166-68; Brophy, *Miner's Life*, 76; Derickson, "Company Doctors to Union Hospitals," 331; Derickson, *Workers' Health*, 73-85. On funerals in slave culture, see Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 194-202.

[38] William R. Kenny, "Mexican-American Conflict on the Mining Frontier, 1848-1852," *Journal of the West* 6 (1967): 582-92; Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 46-60; Ronald C. Brown, *Hard-Rock Miners: The Intermountain West, 1860-1920* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1979), 9, 131-35, 146-47; Papanikolas, *Buried Unsung*; Miller and Sharpless, *King of Coal*, 135ff; Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (New York: Quadrangle, 1969), 127; Ronald L. Lewis, *Black Coal Miners in America: Race, Class, and Community Conflict, 1780-1980* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987); Joe W. Trotter, Jr., *Coal, Class, and Color: Blacks in Southern West Virginia, 1915-32* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-30* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 164-66; Daniel Letwin, "Race, Class, and Industrialization in the New South: Black and White Coal Miners in the Birmingham District of Alabama, 1878-1897" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1991); Fox, *United We Stand*, 37-38, 102-12; Herbert G. Gutman, "The Negro and the United Mine Workers of America: The Career and Letters of Richard L. Davis and Something of Their Meaning, 1890-1900," in Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Work Class and Social History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 121-208, esp. 187; Long, *Sun Never Shines*, 159-65; William Regensburger, "The Emergence of Industrial Unionism in the South, 1930-1945: The Case of Coal and Metal Miners," in *How Mighty a Force?: Studies of Workers' Consciousness and Organization in the United States*, ed. Maurice Zeitlin (Los Angeles: UCLA, Institute of Industrial Relations, 1983), 65-127.

The career of Richard L. Davis reflects the growing, but limited, commitment to solidarity across racial lines in mining work during the late nineteenth century. Born in Roanoke, Virginia, in 1864, Davis first worked as a miner in West Virginia. In 1882, he moved to Rendville, Ohio, in the Hocking Valley mining district, where he resided for the rest of his life. (Such long tenure, especially given that local operators barred him from employment, suggests that he may have owned a home.) Large numbers of African Americans had first arrived in the southeastern Ohio mines, hired to break a strike in 1874-1875. Davis found employment at Mine 3, the only mine in the Sunday Valley Creek area that hired African Americans. During the 1880s, he became involved with the Knights of Labor. In 1890, he was a delegate at the founding convention of the UMW. Active in his local in Rendville, he not only handled grievances as a member of the mine committee, but also served as the check-weighman at Mine 3. In 1896, Davis, who had criticized the exclusion of Blacks from union leadership, won election to the UMW National Executive Board. He became the first African American to act as a national officer of any major union in the United States. By this time, recruitment of African Americans had taken on urgency due to their increased hiring as strikebreakers. A fearless organizer, Davis accepted a series of perilous assignments throughout the 1890s. In 1898, he observed, "I have had the unpleasant privilege of going into the most dangerous places in this country to organize." This pioneering advocate of interracial unionism died of "lung fever" in 1900. Davis's significance consists not only in his attainment of national office, but also in his embodiment of the masses of unheralded rank-and-file activists, who continued to work in their trade between local and national organizing projects.[39]

Davis had joined the Knights of Labor because this union was a key force for organizing unskilled workers and included African Americans in their ranks. Although Terence Powderly, the Knight's Grand Master Workman, discouraged strikes, the Knights provided a culture of solidarity and protest that would shape later labor organizing. The Knights' inclusion of African Americans helped the union to advance in southern coal fields, which employed a high number of Black men, especially in the Birmingham District of Alabama. Prior to the 1870s, the city of Birmingham did not exist, but the rich coalfields coupled with the introduction of railroad lines precipitated rapid industrial growth. By the end of the century, the Birmingham District (the city and industrial towns that ringed the urban center) had become the center of the industrial New South.

Railroads were, by far, the most important facilitator of Birmingham's growth as a city and industrial district. Of all the regional railroads, the Nashville and Louisville line proved most significant for Birmingham's growth. The company facilitated industrial development by purchasing land on which to build new mines and pumping money into the construction of new furnaces; this was all in addition to providing low freight costs to bring coal and pig iron to regional and national markets. The Pratt Company was largely responsible for the boom of coal production in the Birmingham District during the late nineteenth century. Other notable mining interests and furnace companies included the Alice and Mary Pratt Furnaces, the Birmingham Rolling Mill, the Cahaba Coal Mining Company, the Sloss Furnace Company, and the Woodward Iron Company. By the late 1880s, much of the industrial development had consolidated under the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company (TCI) as well as in the hands of coal

[39] Gutman, "Negro and UMW," 121-208; Fox, *United We Stand*, 37-38; Lewis, *Black Coal Miners in America*, 100-2.

baron Henry DeBardeleben via the DeBardeleben Coal and Iron Company. DeBardeleben, with the aid of outside investment, established the town of Bessemer, just southwest of the city of Birmingham. Within the span of ten years, DeBardeleben had established seven blast furnaces, seven coalmines, seven iron ore mines, and 900 coke ovens. Additionally, DeBardeleben owned 140,000 acres of land containing the richest iron and coal deposits in the region. In 1887 TCI established four furnaces in the town of Ensley, which Enoch Ensley had recently established to the west of Birmingham city. In the midst of this, businesses headquartered in New York and Virginia took over the Sloss Furnace Company and created the Sloss Iron and Steel Company. "By the 1890s," historian Alex Lichtenstein argues, "Birmingham and its surrounding counties had by far the most fully developed coal and iron complexes in the Deep South, which had developed at an astonishing rate during the 1880s." By the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century, Alabama had become the fifth largest producer of bituminous coal in the country. Between 1880 and 1910, coal production grew from a modest 380,000 in annual tonnage to an output of sixteen million tons. In 1880, approximately 8,000 miners labored in the mines; by 1920, that number had grown to 26,000.[40]

Most of the original workers in the mines and furnaces of Birmingham came from the rural towns surrounding Birmingham. African American miners came from even more distant areas—opting to leave cotton farming in the deeper South—traveling upwards of eighty to one hundred miles northward to Birmingham. Some of these workers left the miseries of sharecropping on their own accord, seeking new opportunities in the growing industrial center; some followed the siren song of Black recruiters whom coal companies hired to entice African American men to work in the mines. Labor recruiters and contractors even fanned out into nearby states, luring men from Georgia, Tennessee, and South Carolina with promises—often false—of higher pay, better housing, and free rail transportation. Some came to establish a new life, bringing their families with them on the journey. Others maintained one foot in farm work and the other in industrial labor by working for wages in the mines during slack seasons and returning home during planting and harvest seasons.

The mines and furnaces of Birmingham depended on the labor performed by free African Americans, African American convicts leased from local penitentiaries, native-born Whites, and immigrant Whites. Beginning near the close of the nineteenth century, African Americans and Whites formed biracial unions to push for contracts that would improve wages and working conditions. The coal industry is particularly important in the history of unionization in America, for it was the first one to become organized along industrial lines, rather than by craft. This kind of approach required a more racially inclusive stance than the craft-based unions affiliated with the AFL, which tended to exclude low wage workers.[41] In 1894, the United Mine Workers of Alabama initiated one of the first interracial labor uprisings in the Deep South by participating in a nation-wide mining strike.

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[40] Robert H. Woodrum, *"Everybody was Black Down There"*, 15; Alex Lichtenstein, "Racial Conflict and Racial Solidarity in the Alabama Coal Strike of 1894: New Evidence for the Gutman-Hill Debate," *Labor History* 36, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 68; Daniel Lewtin, *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism: Alabama Coal Miners, 1878-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 16-17, 27.

[41] Lichtenstein, "Racial Conflict and Racial Solidarity in the Alabama Coal Strike of 1894," 64.

In order to thwart a working-class solidarity that crossed racial boundaries, coal companies often played the race card—using the specter of social equality and integration to divide workers along racial lines. The coal companies' reliance on African American convict workers to act as strike breakers further exacerbated racial tensions in the mines. Coal companies operated some mines with an exclusively African American labor force, which practically opened the door for racial violence when White miners could not find jobs. Yet, despite these challenges, miners did attempt to cultivate and maintain some form of class-consciousness that transcended racial boundaries. During the 1894 strike, despite the fact that many White unionists continued to hold racist views, African American miners from communities such as Pratt City maintained the strike alongside White comrades. During this decade, the color line was not as hard and fast among the working class of Birmingham, Alex Lichtenstein argues, for "black and white miner socialized together in integrated saloons in Birmingham and held interracial mass meetings without incident." Furthermore, both White and African American miners retaliated violently against African American strikebreakers that the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company brought into the city.[42] Black miners also played important social and political roles during the strike by attending mass rallies and endorsing Reuben Kolb, a Populist political candidate who promised to end convict labor in the mines.[43]

While the miners who went on strike in 1894 demanded the same kinds of reforms (higher wages, better working conditions, and the expulsion of strikebreakers) for which miners throughout the country fought, they had one grievance that was unique to the South: the convict lease system. After the Civil War, the old penitentiary system could not handle the large influx of convicts in the postwar era; this led to the start of the lease system. Initially, in the years following the war, states viewed the system of leasing convict workers to private companies for a nominal cost as a way to shift the burden of the penal system to the private sector. While the practice began during the Republican era of Reconstruction, the policy fit well with the "Redeemer" Democrats' extreme fiscal conservatism. Leasing convicts became popular among fiscal conservatives because taxpayers would not be responsible for funding prisons and because leasing brought in revenue to the state. The Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company, for example, leased convicts in Tennessee for an annual sum of $101,000. The system was also inextricably tied to race and the rise of white supremacist state governments, as the victims of convict labor were overwhelmingly Black.

The convict lease system became prevalent throughout the South, but the use of forced convict labor in coalmines was particularly acute in Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama. "Redeemer" politicians were primarily concerned with protecting property owners, most of whom were White; so crimes for petty offenses became directed at African Americans. Because their legal rights became increasingly curtailed after political Reconstruction ended in 1876, many of the newfound Black "convicts" were unable to protest or seek legal redress. "With prisoners leased to the private sector, additional convictions meant additional revenues for the empty state

[42] The union later deflected blame from the imported workers by reporting that the companies lured African American strikebreakers from farming regions to the city with the promise of high wages, and then turned around and held them responsible for paying off the costs for their transportation, room, and board.

[43] Woodrum, *"Everybody was Black Down There,"* 13; Lichtenstein, "Racial Conflict and Racial Solidarity in the Alabama Coal Strike of 1894," 70-71, 73.

treasuries," historian Ronald Lewis explains.[44] States, therefore, had an incentive to increase their prison population, which resulted in a situation that disproportionately hurt recently freed African American men.

Even though the federal government had eliminated the highly racist legal policies known as black codes, which had curtailed almost all civil rights for African Americans in the South, southern states responded with a new set of laws that almost exclusively applied to African Americans. Vagrancy laws, as they became known, were legal codes mandating that, if a person (often a man) was caught without work to do, he could be arrested and leased out to a private company as a convict. The imprecise language of these laws made it possible for law enforcement to arrest Black men for a variety of innocuous "offenses" and sentence them to excessively long prison terms, which swelled the population of Black prisoners. Not coincidentally, these "convicts" were then sentenced to the dangerous, difficult, and dirty work of coal mining—work that was, according to Lewis, "deemed uniquely appropriate for blacks." A writer for the Birmingham *Free Lance* accurately summarized that the vagrancy laws made it "a crime for a man to be poor in Alabama," further noting, "If a fellow can not get a job the state calls him a criminal and gives him one at Flat Top—as a convict."[45]

Beginning in 1866, Georgia was the first to adopt the lease system. In Tennessee, which followed soon thereafter, the idea of leasing convicts to private companies, particularly coalmines, initially received widespread support. Companies like TCI used prison labor specifically to keep free miners in check and to keep costs down during the 1870s and 1880s. The lease system lowered miners' status and wages, in addition to proving a major obstacle in collective bargaining.[46] Since the leasing system was often used to bust strikes, miners sometimes took matters into their own hands, most notably in the mining area near Briceville, Tennessee.

In 1883, the Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company leased 1,300 convicts from the state penitentiary to take the place of "free" miners who were demanding better working conditions. Although miners protested, the system went into effect and only made their situation worse. In 1891 miners in Briceville were given a contract stipulating that they were to be paid in scrip (redeemable only at company-owned stores), denied the right to their own checkweigh-man, and made to promise that they would not strike by signing a "yellow-dog" contract. The miners refused, and in July the company brought incarcerated workers into the mines. Company officials ordered the convict laborers to tear down the miners' houses and build stockades for their lodging. Armed miners retaliated by marching on the stockades and ordering the guards to put the convict laborers on an outgoing train; the guards complied and there was no bloodshed. Governor James Buchanan then brought the incarcerated workers back, this time guarded by a police force. However, the whole scenario happened again. The second time, Buchanan agreed to call a special session of the state legislature to look into the matter, but they did not repeal the lease system.

[44] Ronald L. Lewis, *Black Coal Miners in America*, 14.
[45] Lewis, *Black Coal Miners in America*, 15; Lewtin, *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism*, 49, 50. Flat Top was a coalmine owned by the Sloss Company.
[46] Lewis, *Black Coal Miners in America*, 13-16.

Miners then took the law into their own hands. On the night of October 31, 1891, they broke into the mining area, freed the incarcerated workers, and burned down the stockades. They did the same thing at two other mining companies, freeing over 500 convict laborers, although most of them were eventually found and re-incarcerated. Miners across the state demonstrated in favor of the Briceville miners and against the lease system. Although the "convict wars" of 1891-1892 did not directly lead to the abolition of the system, it did mark the beginning of southern labor militancy and contributed to the eventual demise of convict leasing. The state had leased convicts to TCI because it was mutually economically beneficial, but the outbreak of violence cost the state over $125,000. Furthermore, TCI refused to pay for the convicts who had been unable to work during the uprising. An intractable coal company refusing to bear the costs of a situation that directly arose from the system of convict labor led the Tennessee legislature to call an end to the program in 1896, although the state continued to use convict labor in the Brushy Mountain mine, a state-owned site.[47]

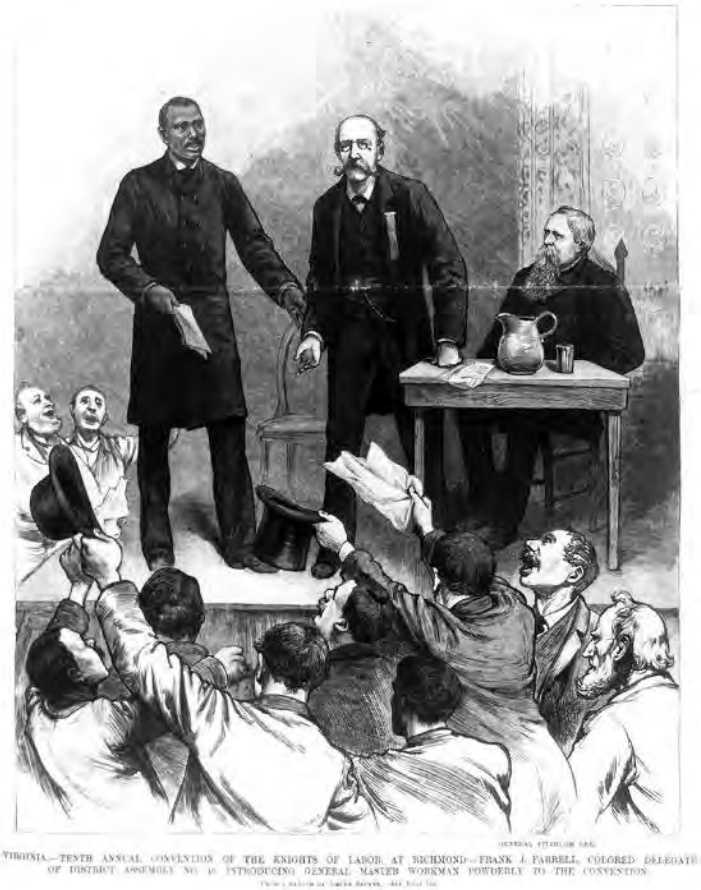
In organizing to advance reforms in the southern coalmines and end the convict labor system, miners relied on local organizations like the United Mine Workers of Alabama, as well as regional branches of national unions like the Knights of Labor and political organizations like the Greenback Party. One of the earliest and most significant Greenback organizers was Willis J. Thomas, an African American miner. Thomas was renowned for his oratory skill and became a leader among African Americans as well as within the Greenback Party as a whole, earning the respect of both Black and White members. He was responsible for organizing seven African American Greenback clubs during the year 1878 alone.[48] Groups like the Greenback Party provided proto-labor organizers with a political network, taught them the skills required to persuade workers to join unions, and provided rhetoric designed to overcome racial barriers in order to sustain strikes and other forms of labor activism.

Although organizations and unions like the Greenbacks, Knights of Labor, and the United Mine Workers of Alabama did not survive past the end of the nineteenth century, they established a foundation upon which new labor unions could build. The color line proved the most intractable obstacle for organizers in the South. Using African American workers—free or imprisoned—as strikebreakers was perhaps the coal companies' most visible means of attempting to break interracial class solidarity. Companies also employed more subtle forms of ensuring that Blacks and Whites received different treatment, which almost always worked against African American workers. For example, companies paid Black workers less than White ones for the same work, did not pay Black miners for dead work, and used wider screens for Black miners, which

[47] C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 232-34; Lewis, *Black Coal Miners in America*, 21-25. Nowhere was the system of convict labor as entrenched, as corrupt, or as harsh as in Alabama. The system was more significant for Alabama's political economy than it was for any other southern state. Convict labor became an entrenched feature of the Pratt Mines, which TCI had acquired in 1886. The system only ended after company guards' brutal treatment of an African American convict named James Knox led to his death on August 4, 1924. Although the company originally claimed that he had died from swallowing bichloride of mercury, a prominent medical professor along with several witnesses testified that his death came from the hands of company guards who repeatedly beat him and subjected him to repeated dosing of hot and cold water after he collapsed, which caused him to die from shock. Public outcry led the state legislature to abolish the system in the aftermath of the scandal in 1928 (Lewis, *Black Coal Miners in America*, 26-35).

[48] Lewtin, The Challenge of Interracial Unionism, 61-62.

decreased their tonnage at weighing time.[49] These methods of discrimination also enabled the companies to cut costs. Unions, if they were to succeed in the South, had to overcome an entrenched racial caste system.



Originally captioned: "Tenth annual convention of the Knights of Labor, at Richmond—Frank J. Farrell, colored delegate of District Assembly No. 49, introducing General Master Workman Powderly to the convention" *(Wood engraving after Joseph Becker, from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 1886, digitally enhanced from original file in LOC P&P]*

The United Mine Workers of America (UMW) was the first national organization to take up the mantle of organizing southern coal miners during the twentieth century. The UMW maintained a policy of targeting both Black and White workers and including African Americans into the main union (rather than having a racially separate union). This policy, of course, did not suit the racial climate of the Jim Crow South. In 1901, during the district convention in Birmingham, the owners of the convention hall tried to deny the union access to their facility after learning of their racial policy. William Kirkpatrick, the district president, held firm on their racial inclusivity and proceeded to denounce the owners, led a vote to change the location to Bessemer, and called for a boycott of local businesses until they issued an apology, which fearful merchants soon did in order to maintain business. Despite the union's policy of complete inclusion, however, local custom did hold sway, and the UMW in Alabama had racially separate locals in order to function

[49] Dead work was work that miners did to prep a mine for coal extraction. Because miners were paid by the amount of coal they produced, this work, although necessary for the job, did not factor into their wages.

in a society that was highly segregated. Considering the social mores of the region, many Black miners favored having a separate union that would respond more directly to their issues and concerns. In 1908, the UMW initiated a biracial strike in the mines, but the obstacles proved too high to surmount. Despite Black and White unionists' effort to maintain the strike, they could not sustain momentum in the face of the companies' unyielding opposition to any reforms, anti-union public opinion, and the use of strikebreakers.[50]

Through its many failures, organized labor in the Southeast during the late nineteenth century through early twentieth century illustrates the enormous odds workers confronted in organizing American industries; these efforts are also important for revealing the complexities of racial politics in the Deep South during the Jim Crow era. Below ground, Black and White miners worked together in close proximity, relied on each other, and even joined forces in organizing to improve their working and economic conditions. Sometimes, at least near the end of the nineteenth century, they even frequented the same working-class saloons. This was precisely at the same time that the social worlds of Blacks and Whites were becoming staunchly segregated by both *de facto* and *de jure* means.[51]



Sacramento Pit Copper Mine, Bisbee, AZ, 1940 *(Russell Lee, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

[50] Lewis, Black Coal Miners in America, 46-47; Robin D. G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," The Journal of American History, Vol. 80, No. 1 (Jun. 1993): 97.

[51] Woodrum, "Everybody was Black Down There," 12.

Strikes in the Metal Mines of the Southwest

While coal extraction was the form of mining that characterized the Southeast, the Southwest was marked by silver and copper metal mining. One of the key mining districts was Clifton-Morenci in Arizona. Mexican miners constituted a bulk of the workforce because they had experience in the ore mines of the Arizona-Sonora region in Mexico. Despite the district's marked isolation from nearby towns and military posts, Mexican workers began moving into it when it opened in 1872, bringing both their experience in mining and their knowledge of the smelting process. With their skills in the latter, Mexican workers constructed and controlled the first smelters in Clifton. By November of 1878, construction of the Southern Pacific Railroad line in the region brought a large number of Chinese laborers, who soon began to compete with Mexican workers for jobs on the railroads, although not in the mines at first. When the Chinese immigrants began to find employment in the mines, they were given the worst jobs and forced to work separately from the White and Mexican workers, who had been laboring side by side. By 1890, Clifton was home to Mexican, Anglo, Chinese, American Indian, Jewish, and Italian groups, each of which established small businesses throughout the area. Almost all residents were either directly employed by, or somehow tied to, the Arizona Copper Company, which maintained an economic stranglehold in Clifton.

Technological developments in smelting made copper mining even more profitable by the turn of the twentieth century, which led companies to search for more workers. Companies hired labor contractors to recruit workers in much the same way that labor recruiters did in the East. In the West, however, labor contractors often went across the Mexican border to recruit workers who were willing to work for low wages, a situation that severely hurt labor organizing efforts in the region. Since immigration laws at the time primarily applied to those coming overseas into port cities, the restrictions often did not suit the conditions of inland immigration and could be easily evaded in the borderlands. Mexican immigration generally went unnoticed until after 1900, when the feeder railroad lines in the copper districts of Arizona carried thousands of Mexican workers into the state, tripling the number of immigrants who entered between 1900 and 1910 from those who had come in the 1880s and 1890s combined.

Union organizers in the area turned their attention to fighting companies that violated immigration laws and employed foreign labor. Socialists and trade unionists began to take Mexican workers into account because of the expanding nature of these movements and because industries in the Southwest often imported Mexican labor to break strikes and depress wages. Organizers developed this tactic particularly after the importation of Mexican strikebreakers defeated the Colorado coal strikes of 1903-04. Growing anger against Mexican workers led many White miners to lump Mexican American and Mexican workers together, despite the unions' efforts not to discriminate against American workers of Mexican descent. This put Mexican Americans in a difficult position because, while they resented immigrant workers who would work for lower wages, they also faced discrimination from White workers. Mexican workers, however, had a history of organizing as well. Mexican miners went on strike in 1906 against the US company Greene-Cananea Copper in the Cananea-Sonora district, just over the Mexican border. Although Mexican dictator Porfirio Diaz sent in the military, which brutally

suppressed the strike, this effort marked "the first serious labor awakening in the southern republic," according to historian William G. Whittaker.[52]

The first Western Federation of Miners local in Arizona began in 1896, and it focused on fighting against companies' use of foreign strikebreakers and for the eight-hour day. The eight-hour law passed and went into effect on June 1, 1903, and it was understood that this law would not affect wages. However, on June 2, mine operators in Clifton reduced wages by a tenth, an action that precipitated the strike. The following day, workers left the job and effectively shut down all the smelters and mills; 80 to 90 percent of the striking workers were Mexican. A. Salcido, the president of a local Mexican society; Frank Colombo, an Italian; and W. H. Lastenneau, a Romanian, were identified as the strike's leaders. Although many of the White participants soon deserted the strike, the Mexican workers held fast. Arizona Territorial Governor Alexander Brodie had dispatched the Arizona Rangers, a group formed to prevent labor uprisings, to the scene, but weather conditions ultimately led to the strike's demise. Several strong rainstorms created a flood in Clifton, which killed fifty people and caused over $100,000 in property damage. The area most affected was that in which many Mexican families lived, and their need to focus on the immediate disaster led strikers to end the walkout.

Mexican workers launched another strike in the Clifton-Morenci copper mining district in 1915, an event that the labor-socialist press followed closely. The strike occurred just before the AFL convention of 1915, which, Whittaker argues, "laid the institutional foundation for broader Mexican-American and Pan-American trade union solidarity." This event had ramifications that went well beyond the confines of a domestic labor dispute and entered the realm of international relations and foreign policy. Many Mexican working-class leaders were among those opposed to Porfirio Diaz during the outset of the Mexican Revolution, and during the early twentieth century they formed communities of political exiles in cities from St. Louis to Los Angeles. These groups included the Magonistas (followers of Ricardo Flores Magon), who shared organized labor's opposition to figures like Philip Randolph Hearst and corporations like Standard Oil, as well as the Roosevelt and Taft administrations. Several key figures in the American labor movement, including John Murray (editor of the Los Angeles Labor Council journal, *Los Angeles Citizen*), Samuel Gompers, and future secretary of labor William B. Wilson, who was then the secretary-treasurer of the UMW, sympathized with the Magonistas. Mining groups including the WFM and UMW supported the political opposition to Diaz. Unions and Socialist groups also opposed US intervention in the Mexican Revolution.[53] Labor unions and political radicals, therefore, had made strong inroads into the region by the time of the most significant labor event during the WWI era: The Bisbee Deportation of 1917.

[52] William G. Whittaker, "Samuel Gompers, Labor, and the Mexican-American Crisis of 1916: The Carrizal Incident," *The Journal of Labor History* 7, no. 4 (1976): 553.

[53] Joseph F. Park, "The 1903 'Mexican Affair' at Clifton," *Journal of Arizona History* 18 (Summer 1977): 119-148. "The Bisbee Deportation of 1917," University of Arizona Special Collections, 2005, https://speccoll.library.arizona.edu/news/remembering-bisbee-deportation-1917; Whittaker, "Samuel Gompers, Labor, and the Mexican-American Crisis of 1916," 553-554.



Marching I.W.W. detainees from Lowell (now part of Bisbee), AZ, July 12, 1917 *(George C. Dix, LOC P&P)*

The Bisbee Deportation

Copper was first discovered in Arizona in 1853; by 1907 the territory was producing the highest amount of copper in the country, surpassing even Montana. Bisbee was one of four main copper mining districts. Besides being geographically concentrated in a few regions, the economics of copper mining was also consolidated in a few hands, such as the Phelps-Dodge Company, which was the largest producer in the industry. Although Bisbee was not technically a company town, the Phelps-Dodge Company owned the local hospital, department store, library, newspaper, and other smaller business ventures throughout the town, in addition to controlling the local mines.

During the early years of the twentieth century, the key union among metal miners was the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), which became the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers (MMSW) in 1916. With leaders who leaned socialist, the WFM was one of the first supporters of the radical Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), although they would eventually sever ties.[54] Two leaders who would play instrumental roles in the IWW, Big Bill Haywood and Vincent St. John, got their start in the WFM. While many (if not most) mining companies opposed unionization, the Phelps-Dodge Company opposed the WFM most vehemently because of its reputation for labor militancy. Regardless, the newly minted MMSW began to organize miners in Bisbee in 1916 and counted over 1800 members by Labor Day. Around the same time, the IWW moved into the region and began their effort to recruit and organize workers. Buoyed financially by a spike in membership in the grain belt, the IWW was able to direct members' dues to supporting new campaigns in the southwestern mines. During a convention in June of 1917, members selected Grover H. Perry as secretary-treasurer. Together

[54] For further information on the IWW, see the Agricultural and Manufacturing labor chapters in this study.

with an executive board consisting of seven elected members, Perry set up shop in Phoenix, and later Salt Lake City, Utah. Later that same month, on June 24th, the Bisbee local of the IWW Metal Mine Workers Industrial Union No. 800 held a meeting. The four hundred to five hundred attendees elected a committee to draft a list of reform demands to present to the companies, which included improvements in safety and working conditions, the prohibition of discrimination against workers with union affiliations, and a pay increase to $6 per diem for underground workers and $5.50 for those who worked above ground.

During this time, racial tensions between White and Mexican American workers in Bisbee were high. City boosters promoted the town as a White man's workplace, and the mines were staunchly segregated. Companies exclusively hired White miners to work in underground mines and relegated Mexican workers to common labor work relating to the railroads. To meet the wartime demand for copper, the Phelps-Dodge Company began to operate open-pit mines while still adhering to their policies of segregation. The "surface" labor force that worked in the open pits was predominantly Mexican. At this time, underground workers receive $4.00 a day whereas surface workers received $2.50. The IWW at the time had turned its attention to organizing Mexican workers and hired Benito Garcia and Joseph Robles, two Mexican organizers, to work as recruiters. Furthermore, the demand to increase the salary for surface workers would close the pay gap for White and Mexican workers. Focusing on improving pay for a line of work that was exclusively Mexican certainly helped the IWW to gain more Mexican recruits. Furthermore, the fact that IWW members had fought alongside the Magonistas during the Mexican Revolution helped the organization to curry the favor of Mexican miners.

When the company officials refused to satisfy any of the union's demands, the IWW called a strike on June 26, 1917. Aside from some verbal altercations, the strike was peaceful, with the IWW concentrating on picketing and soapbox preaching in local parks. Yet, this did not soften the company officials' attitudes towards the strikers or the IWW; Walter Douglass, the general manager of the Phelps-Dodge Corporation in the district, claimed that the best way to deal with the IWW was to "run them out of town," which was just what, in fact, they did. On July 12, 1917, at 6:30 in the morning, Sheriff Harry Wheeler issued a warning for women and children to stay off the streets, for a "Sheriff's Posse" of 1,200 had formed to arrest the striking workers on charges of vagrancy and treason as well as disturbing the peace. The proclamation further declared, "There is no labor trouble—we are sure of that—but a direct attempt to embarrass and injure the government of the United States." With that, 2,000 men armed and wearing armbands for identification rounded up men on the streets as well as in their homes. Each victim was asked whether he was working or was willing to work; if he answered no, then he was sent to the bleachers of the local baseball field to wait. Even men who had no connection to the strike were swept up in the raid and sent to wait with the others. All telephone and telegraph wires were censored for the duration of the raid. The "deputies" denied the seized men access to water, but they did offer them the opportunity to leave the group in order to work in the mines or to grab a gun and assist in the roundup. A total of approximately 1,300 men were eventually deported—herded onto railroad cattle cars guarded by a motorcade of men with rifles and even a mounted machine gun. After one stop for water and an unsuccessful attempt to unload the men in Columbus, New Mexico, the guards abandoned the men in the town of Hermanes, without food or water. Of the 1,300 men deported, only 426 were IWW members.

The Citizens' Protective League and the Workers' Loyalty League, two antiradical groups, were largely responsible for executing the raid and deportation. After the deported men—many of whom owned homes and had families in Bisbee—were exiled from the town, the men in charge of the deportation established a kangaroo court on the outskirts of the Bisbee city limits to determine who would be able to come back freely, who would "voluntarily" leave permanently, and who would go to jail. The Douglas Chamber of Commerce and the Mines even issued "passports"; all those who came into Warren District had to have one if they were to remain in the town. Eventually, the Governor stepped in and ordered the kangaroo court to be disbanded, although he had to threaten to bring in Federal powers when the deputies initially disregarded his orders. Women were also not immune to the deportation fervor—the Citizens' Protective League tried to persuade women whose husbands had been deported to leave town, arguing that they had no one to provide for them. The League also used women and families as pawns to lure men back to the mines by denying them access to purchasing necessities like groceries. League members also forced other women who supported the strike to close their businesses, usually by persuading landlords to significantly raise rents on the eateries and boarding houses that these women operated. Pro-company landlords even voluntarily evicted the families of striking workers.

During the deportation, women also became key figures in calling for government interference. Rosa McKay, who was married to an AFL member, immediately wired William B. Wilson about the hardship and fear that women faced in the wake of the deportation. This argument was, in some respects, a tactic, for the women of Bisbee were hardly meek and docile during the deportation and its aftermath—they resisted the arrests of their family members and organized relief efforts, driving out to New Mexico to bring food and other necessities to the stranded deportees. One resident named Anna Payne faced arrest for speaking publicly on behalf of the striking miners and even went to the train yard to demand the release of her two sons, which she succeeded in procuring.

By October 19, the camp of deported men that had formed near Columbus, New Mexico, disbanded as the men gradually returned to Bisbee or left the area. In the midst of this, a government commission called the President's Mediation Commission investigated the conditions and situation in Bisbee and made recommendations to resolve the problems.[55] During the investigation of the deportation that Arizona Attorney General Wiley Jones conducted, women served as key witnesses, congregating at a local boarding house four weeks after the incident to recount their experiences of witnessing armed men haul their brothers, husbands, sons, and boarders from their beds and breakfast tables. The presidential committee investigating the incident issued a report in which they blamed the company for the deportation, which they declared was illegal, but they ultimately determined that it was a state rather than a federal matter. Ultimately, the strike failed; the men who were responsible for the deportations escaped federal prosecution and were victorious in a trial in county court. Eventually, however, unions were able to make successful entries into the copper industry during the New Deal.[56]

[55] Felix Frankfurter, a future Supreme Court Justice, served as a legal counsel to the Commission.

[56] Philip Taft, "The Bisbee Deportation," *Journal of Labor History* 13, no. 1 (1972): 4-7, 10, 12, 14-16, 22-24, 26-27, 38; Colleen O'Neill, "Domesticity Deployed: Gender, Race and the Construction of Class Struggle in the Bisbee Deportation," *Labor History* 34 (1993): 156-57, 259, 263-66, 268, 271.

Both the IWW and the WFM worked to organize miners in the copper region of Arizona. During the era of heightened organization among extractive workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both organizations were active throughout the industry, particularly in the West. Among the many organizers who made their way through the extractive (and other) industries in this region was native son, Big Bill Haywood. Like Mother Jones, Haywood's organizing ranged across the American workforce, but centered on extractive workers. The son of a hardrock miner, Haywood was born in Salt Lake City in 1869. At age fifteen, he was digging for silver in the Ohio Mine at Rebel Creek, Nevada, a remote site more than fifty miles from any sizable town. While staying in the company bunkhouse, isolated from commercial culture, Haywood and his fellow employees entertained themselves with long discussions. In this setting, he learned what he called "my first lessons in unionism" from a co-worker who was a member of the Knights of Labor and a veteran of the miners' unions in Bodie, California, and Virginia City, Nevada. Haywood's recollection of the rude, cramped accommodations at Rebel Creek indicates that they typified miners' dormitories of the period:

> It was built of lumber and was about twenty-eight feet long, fourteen feet wide, divided in two by a partition. In the front room bunks were ranged, double length and three high. In this room there were no chairs, no tables, no furniture of any kind other than a desk and the stuff belonging to the men, consisting almost entirely of blankets and clothing, and a few suitcases and bags thrown under the lower bunks.
>
> The second room had a big cook-stove in the corner, a kitchen table and a cupboard along one wall. Along the other wall, where there was a window, was a long table covered with brown flower-patterned oil-cloth, with benches running the full length on either side. Overhead on the beams were piled the groceries and other supplies and the bunk of the Chinese cook, which was reached by a ladder.

A decade later, Haywood joined and immediately became a leader in the WFM while working in southwestern Idaho. As an activist in WFM Local 66, he played an important part in founding the Silver City Miners' Union Hospital in 1897. In 1901, Haywood was elected secretary-treasurer of WFM and resettled in its general headquarters in Denver. Serving as both administrator and organizer, he soon found himself on the front lines of two of the roughest strikes in American history, in Cripple Creek and Telluride, Colorado.

Frustrated with defeated strikes in his own industry and with the defeatist attitude of the mainstream labor movement, Haywood played a prominent role in launching the IWW. In fact, he called to order the first session of the founding convention in Brand's Hall in Chicago on June 27, 1905. For the next sixteen years, Haywood deployed a repertoire of leadership skills—recruiting, negotiating, troubleshooting, restructuring, even recordkeeping—attempting to build a radical movement open to all wage-earners. He continued to devote a large share of his time to organizing campaigns and labor-management disputes in the extractive sector. These included the western Louisiana lockout against the Brotherhood of Timber Workers of 1912, the iron

miners' strike on the Mesabi Range in 1916, the Bisbee events, and other no-holds-barred affairs.[57]





(L) ***National Guardsmen watch strikers from atop railroad boxcars, Ludlow, CO, 1914*** *(WPRL)*
(R) ***Striking miners and families living in tent colony after eviction from company housing, Ludlow, CO, 1913-194*** *(WPRL)*

Strikes in the Mines of Colorado

Bisbee was one of several mining strikes during the turn of the century that turned violent. Other strikes in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; the towns of Telluride, Cripple Creek, and Leadville in Colorado; and the copper districts of upper Michigan were all marked by violence. Yet, perhaps none would receive the same level of notoriety as the strike in Ludlow, Colorado, from 1913-1914. On April 20, 1914 the Ludlow Tent Colony became infamous when a battle broke out between the National Guard and company guards on one side, and striking workers on the other. The battle resulted in the burning of the tent colony and caused the deaths of two women, eleven children, and several striking miners. While the violence perpetrated against striking miners was not new in the history of labor struggles in America, this was the first time that women and children were identified as victims, and this is what galvanized a public outcry against the coal operators and owners.

Coal mining in southern Colorado did not fully develop until after the arrival of railroads in the 1870s. The Denver and Rio Grande Railway first arrived in Trinidad, the area of the 1913-14 strike, in 1876, precipitating the rise of the southern Colorado coal industry. By the 1880s, the high output of rich bituminous coal made this region the most profitable in the state's coal industry. While native-born Whites and Western European immigrants constituted the mining workforce of the mid-nineteenth century, coal operators began employing recent immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, Mexico, and Japan, along with native-born African Americans, by the end of the century. By 1902, workers from thirty-two nationalities were working in the southern Colorado coalfields. According to a 1915 study of the Las Animas coal

[57] William D. Haywood, *Bill Haywood's Book: The Autobiography of William D. Haywood* (New York: International Publishers, 1929), 22-30; Peter Carlson, *Roughneck: The Life and Times of Big Bill Haywood* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), 33-36, 39-40, 78-84; Joseph R. Conlin, *Big Bill Haywood and the Radical Union Movement* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969); Derickson, *Workers' Health*, ix-x, 99; William Carter, *Ghost Towns of the West* (Menlo Park, CA: Lane Publishing, 1978), 157; Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 81, 216, 330-33, 388-89.

camps, a majority of the workforce was from Southeastern and Eastern Europe—with Italians and Slavs (a category including those from Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia) as the dominant nationalities—and two-thirds of those workers were new immigrants. Racism and nativism ran throughout the camps; operators often deliberately cultivated a multiethnic workforce but housed them in segregated neighborhoods of the company towns in order to thwart collectivization and increase workers' dependence on the company.

The problems that plagued the mining industry in other regions also hit the southern Colorado coalmines. A lack of experienced miners coupled with an unusually high amount of coal dust because of the region's arid climate exacerbated the number of explosions. The absence of workers' compensation laws and lax regulations led to a high mortality rate in the mines of southern Colorado. By 1902, Colorado had the highest mine fatality rate in the country. Miners also protested payment in scrip, low wages, discriminatory treatment of union workers, and the companies' policies regarding coal weighing. These grievances led the UMW to organize a strike of coalminers in December 1901, which closed eight Colorado Fuel & Iron mines—an effort that ended in mixed results.

In 1913, the UMW led another strike in both the northern and southern mining regions in the state, demanding union recognition. The UMW dispatched organizers, many of whom were fluent in the various languages of the immigrant labor force, to the office that the union had recently opened in Trinidad. Early in September, Mother Jones even made an appearance to rally workers in the southern fields for a potential walkout. On September 15, the union held a convention to determine a course of action. Delegates representing the miners voted unanimously to call a strike, demanding a series of reforms (wage increases, an eight-hour day, payment for dead work, elected check weighmen, and other demands reminiscent of previous strikes) as well as union recognition. Company officials staunchly refused to turn their field into a closed shop, and both sides began to prepare for a protracted fight.

All workers who joined the strike faced immediate evictions from their company-owned houses. Fully anticipating this course of events, the UMW began leasing land near the entrance of the mines to establish tent colonies even before the September convention. Not only did these provide places to move families, but also their strategic locations facilitated greater ease in monitoring the actions of strikebreakers and maintaining picket lines. The Ludlow camp was the largest of six tent colonies established in Las Animas County. The tent colonies reflected the multiethnic nature of the mining workforce—Greek, Mexican, Italian, German, French, Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Austrian, Tyrolean, and Croatian immigrants joined forces with native-born workers in maintaining the strike. Working together for a common purpose enabled many to overcome their differences and generate a well-functioning pluralist community. Women also played a key role in maintaining the strike—they conducted interviews with the press, greeted public and government officials who visited the camps, and harassed both strikebreakers and guards on the railroad tracks leading to the mines. Many even assisted on the 'front lines' of the battle in the camp.

While spats of violence began alongside the building of the camps, these paled in comparison to the events of that spring. Acquiescing to pressures from coal officials, Governor Elias Ammons ordered National Guard troops to the strike zone on October 28, 1913. Although the strikers initially accepted, and even welcomed, the troops, their feelings soon soured after a number of

arbitrary inspections and arrests. Adjutant General John Chase, an ophthalmologist from Denver, even established his own—unsanctioned—martial law over the area. The situation worsened when, despite threats of arrest, Mother Jones came to Trinidad on January 4, 1914, only to be intercepted by local law enforcement and forcibly held at a local hospital for nine weeks. On January 21, miners' wives marched through Trinidad demanding Jones' release.

When the National Guard dismantled the tent colony of Forbes, just to the south of Ludlow, after incidents of violence in March 1914, the residents of Ludlow began to dig cellars for their defense should the Guard attempt the same there. Indeed, violence did erupt on April 20. Although it is unclear which side initiated the fight, the result was a pitched battle that raged through the night—pitting the miners (whose numbers were higher) against the National Guardsmen and company guards (who had better weaponry and more of it). That night, a fire broke out in the camp. Although it is also unclear who started the fire, a military investigatory commission later determined that troops spread the blaze throughout the colony with the intention of destroying it. In the midst of the attack, thirteen residents of the colony—two women and eleven children—sought refuge in a cellar beneath one of the tents. When the fire consumed the tent, they died as a result of burns, asphyxiation, or both. For the next ten days miners engaged in direct action against the guardsmen and mine guards in what became known as the "Ten Days War," before agreeing to a truce. By that December, the strike had ended in failure for the strikers. However, the UMW soon acquired the land upon which the colony had been established and erected a monument honoring those who died during the strike in 1918 (Ludlow Tent Colony Site, NHL, 2008).[58]

[58] R. Laurie Simmons, Thomas H. Simmons, and Charles Haecker, "Ludlow Tent Colony Site," *National Historic Landmark Nomination* (2009), 13, 16, 27-33, 35-36, 38-40, 43-45, 47.



Aftermath of the Ludlow Massacre, during which a tent camp of striking miners at Ludlow, Colorado was attacked by the Colorado National Guard on April 20, 1914 *(LOC P&P, Bain)*

Strikes in Iron and Hard Rock Mines

Many of the significant strikes in the extractive industries occurred during WWI, when workers sought to use the wartime demand for raw materials to push for labor reforms while operators used that same demand to speed up production and thwart unionization. As the economy geared up for war, the demand for both coal and iron ore increased. One area particularly affected by this demand was the Mesabi Range in Minnesota during the spring of 1916. The Oliver Iron Mining Company maintained control over the entire Mesabi Range. Although the Mesabi Range remained a staunchly, and violently, open-shop enterprise—the Oliver opposed any unions whether they were radical or conservative—this did not stop miners from attempting to organize even prior to WWI. In 1905, Finnish miners, many of whom were socialist, began to organize and led their first strike in 1907. Workers would walk off the job again in 1916 in a strike made notable by its display of pan-ethnic solidarity.

A year prior to America's entry into the war, workers who had adopted more radical political and economic views decided to take action. On June 3, 1916 a group of miners on the eastern edge of the Mesabi walked off the job. By the next week, hundreds of miners had joined them. Many miners were upset over the sub-par company housing, but their main grievance was economic—underground miners resented wage cheating and unfair hiring practices. When the AFL failed to demonstrate adequate concern for the iron miners, the more radically inclined turned to the IWW for help. The IWW responded by sending some of its key organizers: Sam Scarlett, Carlo Tresca, Joe Schmidt, and James Gilday. To effectively organize the multicultural workforce, the strike

leaders established a central strike committee that included representatives from each nationality present in the mines. Many of the workers who participated in the strike were recent immigrants; new Slavic and Italian immigrants occupied the worst jobs and had the worst housing, and thus had the most to win if the strike should succeed. Finnish groups led the strike and Finnish socialist halls served as strike headquarters. During the strike's apex, over 8,000 workers remained off the job. The company responded by employing armed guards and special deputies, who attempted to break the strike through violent means. Once the strike had collapsed by the end of the summer, the IWW and some of the miners tried to resume their efforts in 1917, but the wartime suppression of radicalism was an insurmountable obstacle. After this strike, the only other serious attempt to organize miners on the Mesabi Range during the period from 1918 to the early 1930s came in 1919 when the Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers organized a local in Virginia, Minnesota.[59]

Labor radicalism had coursed through northern mines long before the WWI era, particularly in the mines around Butte, Montana. Butte became known as the 'Gibraltar of unionism' for its strong record of labor organizing, beginning with the formation of the first miners' union in 1878. In 1892, the Butte Miners' Union played a key role in forming the United Federation of Miners. Butte unions, however, were not just restricted to miners, for almost every occupation in extractive, service, and even artistic trades had its own union. Even the unions themselves were organized under the umbrella of the Silver Bow Trades and Labor Assembly. The region also had a history of radical politics. While Finnish miners became known for their political radicalism, residents of Butte elected a Socialist party candidate as the mayor in both 1911 and 1913. Unionism, radical politics, and conflicts over WWI would come to a head in 1917 during a strike that the IWW also led in this region.

The IWW first came to Butte in 1912. By 1917, the IWW had formed a union in the mines, albeit one that the company refused to recognize. Their radical organization conflicted, of course, with the more moderate miners' organization, The Metal Mine Workers' Union (MMWU), which struggled to walk its own line between the IWW and the AFL. Despite their efforts, the Anaconda Copper Mining Company repeatedly connected the MMWU to the IWW, which was not only radical, but, in their opposition to WWI, also considered unpatriotic and even pro-German in WWI-era America.

The organizer responsible for leading the IWW effort in Butte was Frank Little. No stranger to controversy, Little had been a leader of the IWW strike in Bisbee and was the union's executive chairman. While in Butte, Little gave speeches railing against the war, international politics, President Wilson, city ordinances, and the constitution, thus exemplifying much of what critics saw as the worst of the IWW. On the morning of August 1, 1917, armed vigilantes abducted Little from his boarding house room and dragged him out of town tied to the back of a car. Afterward, the posse beat Little and lynched him from a railroad trestle on the edge of the city. A

[59] Sofchalk, "Organized Labor and the Iron Ore Miners of Northern Minnesota," 215, 228-29, 239. Sofchalk opens his article with an IWW song about this particular incident: *The Miners of the Iron range/ Know there was something wrong / They banded all together, yes / In One Big Union strong. / The Steel Trust got shivers / And the Mine guards had some fits, / The Miners didn't give a damn / But closed down all the pits.*

note was pinned to his underwear stating "OTHERS TAKE NOTICE! FIRST AND LAST WARNING! 3-7-77 L-D-C-S-S-W-T." The murderers were never identified.[60]



"Rolling logs into the river," Michigan, 1901 *(W.J. Beal, NARA, Records of the Forest Service [95-G-43256])*

Strikes in the Timber Industry

As active as the IWW was in mining, this was not the only industry toward which leaders directed their organizing efforts. The IWW was also strong in the timber regions of the South and Pacific Northwest. Both regions presented challenges to the IWW's brand of radical syndicalist unionism, but in the South the union had to contend with staunch social and political conservativism, an entrenched racial hierarchy, and the rural nature of the region. Various IWW locals emerged throughout the South, but much of their organizing energy was focused in Louisiana—in rice fields, oil fields, docks, and forests; it was in this last area where they made their strongest stand.

The lumber industry in Louisiana was centered in the yellow pine and cypress belts of the central and western parts of the state. During the early twentieth century, large and small lumber companies here produced 8 percent of the nation's lumber. While the field was an easy one to enter, soon small companies were being shut out of the market as larger companies consolidated their timberland holdings. According to a union estimate, ten firms employed more than half of the lumber workforce in the state. Like other industries of the early twentieth century, the Louisiana lumber companies formed various trade associations to serve their economic interests,

[60] Punke, *Fire and Brimstone*, 137, 176-78, 202-204. The number 3-7-77 was the calling card of Montana vigilantes during the frontier era—sometimes pinned on lynching victims as a warning to any compatriots. The "L" in the numbers had been circled and most likely stood for Little; the rest were the first letters of the surnames of other strike leaders.

the largest of which was the Southern Lumber Operators' Association (SLOA). According to historian Merl Reed, the SLOA began in the aftermath of a lumber strike in 1907 and therefore focused on impeding labor organizing in the industry through such tactics as yellow-dog contracts, lockouts, blacklists, espionage, and race-baiting.[61]

Working conditions in Louisiana's lumber industry were harsh. Per capita wages were lower there than in the rest of the country, workers were often paid in scrip, and underemployment was rampant. On days that they did work, lumber workers worked over eleven hours at a pay rate of $1.00 to $1.50 a day. While the Knights of Labor had attempted to organize lumber workers in Louisiana, unions did not make great gains until the twentieth century. After the same failed strike that precipitated the formation of the SLOA, lumber workers organized the Brotherhood of Timber Workers (BTW), headquartered in Alexandria, Louisiana. Under the leadership of Arthur L. Emerson, the first president of the BTW, and Jay Smith, the union's first secretary, locals developed throughout the state. In many ways the BTW resembled the Knights of Labor—they did not challenge the capitalist system and they accepted the position of employers. They also acted as their regional Knights forbears had by organizing Black workers, albeit in separate locals.

After a failed attempt to force the lumber companies to enact reforms in an ill-fated, seven-month "Lumber War of 1911," members of the BTW began to adopt more radical leanings, even questioning the economic system as a whole. During the Lumber War, the BTW began to turn to outside organizations for help, sending some representatives to the IWW convention in Chicago. After Big Bill Haywood and Covington Hall traveled to Louisiana to speak to the timber workers, the BTW members voted to affiliate with the union and, in September 1912, became the Southern Division of the IWW's National Industrial Union of Forest and Lumber Workers. Encouraged by the IWW's success in the lumber industry of the Northwest, the newfound affiliation raised both hopes and morale among the southern workers. Covington Hall, a native southerner, even stayed in Alexandria and continued to work with the lumber unionists from 1912 to 1914. Other IWW members helped to sustain the union movement by riding freight trains to trouble spots and walking on picket lines to maintain energy and support.

Confrontations between unionists and company officials continued throughout this period. During a meeting of striking workers on July 7, 1912, company men from the Galloway Lumber Company in Graybow opened fire on the strikers, killing four and wounding many others. That same day, a parade of two hundred striking workers and their families marching past the gates of the Galloway Lumber Company faced gunfire coming from the window of John Galloway, the owner. For the next ten minutes, people ran in panic and some armed marchers returned the gunfire; in the end three union men were killed, and another later died from gunshot wounds.

Another major incident of this period occurred at the American Lumber Company plant in Merryville, Louisiana. The plant employed approximately 1,300 men and maintained a company town of 225 houses. After the American Lumber Company fired all union members who were involved in the Graybow affair, workers at the Merryville plant went on strike in November 1912. The company responded by constructing an eight-foot stockade around the plant and

[61] Merl E. Reed, "Lumberjacks and Longshoremen: The IWW in Louisiana," *The Journal of Labor History* 13, no. 1 (1972): 42.

company houses and planned to reopen with non-union workers; less than a month later, the plant was running at full capacity with the replacement workforce.

The strike ripped through the community, pitting friends, relatives, and neighbors against each other. Antiunion residents formed a Good Citizens' League to stir up opposition to the strike. Throughout the strike, union members opposed violence and worked to maintain picket lines and provide relief for the strikers and their families while facing staunch opposition from townspeople and the company. Meanwhile, inside the factory walls, scabs, who were often recruited under false pretenses, were locked inside the stockade under armed guard for weeks at a time—workers who did not cooperate endured beatings from company guards. Despite the almost insurmountable odds against winning, over 300 workers, half of whom were African American, maintained the strike through the early winter. By mid-February, the Good Citizens League and company officials took drastic measures to force the strikers out of town. On February 16, a mob formed and openly threatened strikers, destroyed a soup kitchen, and raided the union hall. "For three days," Reed explains, "the union people at Merryville endured a reign of terror. By the end of that time less than 100 remained in the town." Despite newspaper descriptions of the purge as a peaceful affair, "at least 200 people, in fear of their lives, fled Merryville within a forty-eight-hour period." The Merryville riot proved too devastating for the union and it ended the BTW and the IWW's presence in the lumber camps of Louisiana.[62]

The BTW and IWW in Louisiana are historically important not only for their legacy of direct action, but also for their practice of employing cultural means to create and sustain support for the strike. Historian Jeff Ferrell writes that the BTW "developed and drew on a vigorous counter-culture to that of the southern lumber trust and the social order of which it was a part. Through speeches, poems, and parables, the BTW created for itself and its members a distinctive and defiant style."[63] BTW and then IWW members often delivered speeches at social events like barbeques and picnics—whether they had organized the events or not. Many of the BTW gatherings featured marches to nearby mills with the intention of generating public sympathy and/or convincing strikebreakers to walk off the job and join them. Believing that a pro-union newspaper would be the best means of generating publicity and support, the BTW established *The Lumberjack*, which Covington Hall edited. Throughout its short and beleaguered lifespan, the paper was an important resource for the BTW and IWW members. Hall also submitted articles about the BTW's fight in national IWW papers such as *The Industrial Worker*, *Solidarity*, and *The Rebel* (the Socialist Party of Texas's weekly paper, which was particularly popular among timber workers in eastern Texas and western Louisiana). Besides printing articles about various political and labor struggles, these papers also printed poems, songs, parables, and cartoons. Therefore, in addition to disseminating important information, the papers "were also conduits for the creative outpourings of the membership, and thus critical to the sort of participatory style which the BTW promoted."[64]

[62] Reed, "Lumberjacks and Longshoremen" 41-44, 46-47, 49, 51-53.
[63] Jeff Ferrell, "The Song the Capitalist Never Sings: The Brotherhood of Timber Workers and the Culture of Conflict," *Labor History* 32, no. 3 (1995): 422-426.
[64] Ferrell, "The Song the Capitalist Never Sings," 422-26.

Sometimes, the publications contained not-so-subtle messages of actions that strikers should take. During the Merryville strike the *Industrial Worker* ran the following poem/warning, embedded with clear messages about what BTW workers and sympathizers should do:

> Scabs!
> Attention
> Brotherhood of Timber Workers
> On Strike at Merryville, La.
> Take Warning!
> American Lumber Co.
> Going crazy.
> Everybody's doin' it!
> Doin' what? Nawthin'.

The BTW also used its publications to preach a message of interracial solidarity. Covington Hall's "A Miracle in Dixie" (which parodied A Christmas Story) included the following passage:

> And it came to pass that a miracle happened in the land of Dixie, forasmuch on the morning of a red day three Clans of Toil awakened from a hard superstition and the Anglo-Americans and the Afro-Americans and the Mexican-Americans arose and gathered together around the council fire.[65]

Clearly, according to the IWW, if lumber workers were to succeed in organizing, they would have to include all members regardless of race or ethnicity.

In the Pacific Northwest, timber worker union organizers encountered somewhat similar circumstances. Perhaps their biggest challenge stemmed from the rural isolation that characterized the timber camps and towns. Early lumber port and mill towns on the upper coast of Washington around the Puget Sound were, as one resident recalled, "like little kingdoms, a law unto themselves." Like mining camps, the isolation of timber camps during the nineteenth century rendered them almost immune to outside influences like government supervision and labor organizing. The lumber companies controlled labor by threatening to expel those who agitated and through company owned stores that controlled trade between local farmers and lumber workers. Travel outside of the towns was only available via boat, due to a dearth of roads connecting the towns to other municipalities. Entertainment was just as scarce, for no newspapers were available and the only diversions came from traveling troupes that managed to breach the isolation.[66]

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[65] Ferrell, "The Song the Capitalist Never Sings," 429. Ferrell opens his piece with the Covington Hall poem, "The Song the Capitalist Never Sings,": "I want to be a working man and hear the bosses sing / The praise of 'honest labor' while the big blue whistles ring; / To cheer the starry banner 'till my empty insides bust / And be a company sucker 'till my ragged form is dust" (Covington Hall, "The Song The Capitalist Never Sings," *The Rebel*, 1912).

[66] Robert E. Ficken, *The Forested Land: A History of Lumbering in Western Washington* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987), 31.



Members of Lumber Workers Local 500 pose with literature and IWW pennants in front of the IWW Hall in Sedro Wooley, WA, 1917 *(WPRL)*

The IWW first arrived in the lumber and logging camps of the Pacific Northwest shortly after the union officially formed in 1905 and gained a strong following of timber workers. The IWW first launched a strike in Portland in 1907; they staged a walkout in Grays Harbor five years later. A year afterwards, in 1913, they orchestrated a work stoppage that blanketed the region. During the strikes in the summer of 1917, the IWW focused their efforts in logging camps east of the Cascades where working conditions were the worst. While sawmill workers and loggers earned more in wages than their counterparts in the South and Great Lakes region, a wartime study revealed that half of the camps in the Pacific Northwest region did not provide adequate bunks or showers, and a third lacked toilets. This, however, largely applied to smaller operations rather than the firms that employed the highest number of workers.

The major (and most divisive) demand of the strike was an eight-hour day coupled with a ten-hour day's wage. While some operators agreed to this demand, others refused to capitulate, and those on the fence soon fell in line with the opposition. In order to present a united front, operators in the region formed the Lumbermen's Protective Association in July, which agreed to resist the eight-hour day and impose a $5,000 per diem fine on any operator who violated this agreement. Although not all lumbermen favored the agreement and the hardline stance that came to dominate the group, fears of a militant labor force kept them in line with the rest.

The 1917 timber strike exemplified how the wartime economy could actually hurt strikers and helped the operators. By reducing the amount of lumber on the market, the operators initially saw an increase in lumber prices. The strike ended in defeat for the lumber workers by early September, but the workers' return to work did not mean that they—or the IWW—had given up

the fight. Rather, workers participated in a work slowdown by paying careful attention to safety regulations and blowing the mill whistle at the end of an eight-hour shift. The slowdown wreaked havoc on the industry as the production of logs and lumber slowed to a crawl. Lumbermen responded by demanding that the government intervene and shut down the IWW in the name of patriotism and a strong war effort.[67]

Despite the zealous efforts of both leaders and members of the rank-and-file, the government crackdown on political dissent and civil liberties during the war effectively crippled the IWW. Their antiwar stance made them easy targets for political suppression. Many of their efforts ended in failure, but they succeeded in creating an aura for the group. As an unabashedly radical anti-capitalist group that often used violent rhetoric (a rhetoric that did not necessarily correspond to their actions), the "Wobblies," as they were called, formed a profoundly visible contingent of the labor movement during the Progressive and WWI era. Although they would regroup in the postwar era, the Wobblies were not able to retain the grip on radical organizing, or on the public imagination, that they had maintained prior to the war.

The Significance of Strikes

Many of the strikes in the extractive industries, whether led by the IWW or other local or national labor groups, are nationally significant. For example, a strike in the anthracite mines of northeastern Pennsylvania from 1902 to 1903 was historically important in at least three ways. In terms of workdays lost, this stoppage for several months by more than 150,000 employees was the largest strike in the United States up to that time. Although the organization would experience many subsequent setbacks, the strike did establish the UMW as the representative of hard-coal workers, a role that continues to this day. In addition, the innovative mediating role of federal authorities in this dispute gave the first indication of the major changes in law and policy that would unfold under the New Deal. Unlike its simple duty as strikebreaker in the nineteenth century, this time the federal government intervened to find facts and to force a compromise settlement. The unprecedented, protracted hearings of the Anthracite Coal Strike Commission at the Lackawanna County Courthouse in Scranton captured the attention of the nation throughout the winter of 1902-1903. Although the commission's award gave the hard coal workers modest advances—such as a one-hour reduction in work time to nine hours per day, not the eight-hour day they sought—this resolution was seen as a victory for unionism. Grateful miners placed a statue of UMW president John Mitchell in front of the Scranton courthouse.[68]

The 1902-1903 anthracite dispute hardly revolutionized public policy toward collective action. Government officials crushed countless subsequent strikes. In the 1917 strike in the Northwest lumber and timber industry, the US Army not only drove off IWW activists, but also organized and sponsored its own pseudo-union, the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen. In metal

[67] Robert E. Ficken, "The Wobbly Horrors: Pacific Northwest Lumbermen and the Industrial Workers of the World, 1917-1918" *The Journal of Labor History* 24, no. 3 (Summer 1983): 325-28, 330-33.

[68] Robert J. Cornell, *The Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1957); Robert H. Wiebe, "The Anthracite Strike of 1902: A Record of Confusion," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 48 (1961): 229-51; Miller and Sharpless, *Kingdom of Coal*, 241-83; Blatz, *Democratic Miners*, 99-169; Derickson, "UMW and Recognition of Occupational Diseases," 782-84; Joe Gowaskie, "John Mitchell and the Anthracite Mine Workers: Leadership Conservatism and Rank-and-File Militancy," *Labor History* 27 (1985-86): 54-83.

mining, state militias continued to make frequent, usually decisive, appearances on behalf of the owners. Local police and county sheriffs proved to be reliable agents of the employers.[69]

One indication of the intensity of industrial conflict in extraction was the frequent resort to mass arrests and other types of forcible removal of participants from the immediate battle scene. Large-scale internment of striking workers and supporters took place in a number of disputes. For instance, to break the silver-lead miners' strike in the Coeur d'Alene district of Idaho in 1892, hundreds were rounded up and placed in crude stockades. The Idaho state militia kept activists confined in these so-called bullpens in Wallace and Wardner, Idaho, for weeks without regard for legal due process. The same fate befell coal miners in numerous localities, such as Paint Creek, West Virginia, during the 1912-1913 strike.[70]

When workers resided in company-owned housing, work stoppages brought mass evictions. Evicted strikers often were forced into makeshift accommodations. One such example was the Ludlow Tent Colony.[71] Another method of displacement was mass deportation, as illustrated by the 1912 timber strike in Merryville, Louisiana, and the Bisbee deportation of 1917. A quarter century later, mobs expelled striking lumberjacks and sawmill workers from Newberry and other towns on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. In hardrock mining, forcible expulsion of strikers and even non-striking activists occurred in the course of numerous labor-management confrontations. Taken together, these episodes of confinement, eviction, and deportation demonstrate the way in which industrial disputes in extraction were invariably contests to control territory, as well as to control the terms and conditions of employment.[72]

Other extreme instances of lethal violence by public authorities and private parties abounded. (The public-private distinction blurred when vigilantes, private detectives, and private guards were deputized en masse.) On September 10, 1897, sheriff's deputies shot and killed nineteen unarmed coal miners, all Slavic immigrants, who had peacefully marched from Harwood, Pennsylvania, to the company village of Lattimer, six miles away. In the midst of a regional strike for the eight-hour day, a boatload of timber and sawmill workers organized by the IWW traveled to Everett, Washington, on November 5, 1916. They were met at the docks by a hail of gunfire from local police and vigilantes. The exact death toll remains unknown—the bodies of

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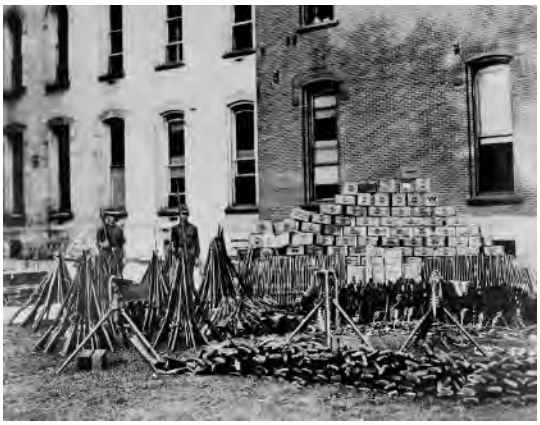
[69] Robert L. Tyler, "The United States Government as Union Organizer: The Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47 (1960): 434-51; Benjamin G. Rader, "The Montana Lumber Strike of 1917," *Pacific Historical Review* 36 (1967): 189-207; George G. Suggs, Jr., *Union-Busting in the Tri-State: The Oklahoma, Kansas, and Missouri Metal Workers, Strike of 1935* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 80, 116; Jensen, *Heritage of Conflict*, 120-52, 229-35, 277-86, 345-49.

[70] Robert W. Smith, The Coeur d'Alene Mining War of 1892: A Case Study of an Industrial Dispute (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1961), 80-105; Jensen, Heritage of Conflict, 130-39; Fox, United We Stand, 152.

[71] George S. McGovern and Leonard F. Guttridge, *The Great Coalfield War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972); Zeese Papanikolas, *Buried Unsung*; Long, *Sun Never Shines*, 261ff; H. M. Gitelman, *Legacy of the Ludlow Massacre: A Chapter in American Industrial Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); Jensen, *Heritage of Conflict*, 269.

[72] Reed, "Lumberjacks and Longshoremen: The IWW in Louisiana," 49; Debra Bernhardt, "Ballad of a Lumber Strike," *Michigan History* 66 (1982): 40, 42; James W. Byrkit, *Forging the Copper Collar: Arizona's Labor Management War of 1901-1921* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982), 157-215; Taft, "The Bisbee Deportation," 3-40; John H. Lindquist and James Fraser, "A Sociological Interpretation of the Bisbee Deportation," *Pacific Historical Review* 37 (1968): 401-22, esp. 413; Jensen, *Heritage of Conflict*, 139-52, 285-86; John E. Haynes, "Revolt of the 'Timber Beasts': IWW Lumber Strike in Minnesota," *Minnesota History* 42 (1971): 173.

five Wobblies were found, and other casualties may have been lost in the waters of Port Gardner Bay.[73]

(L) ***U. S. troops detraining, Logan, WV, August 27, 1921*** *(West Virginia State Archives, Don Cheek Collection)*
(R) ***Weapons confiscated during mine wars on display at the Capitol grounds, Charleston, WV, 1912-1913*** *(West Virginia State Archives, Daniel E. Hall Collection)*

The West Virginia Mine Wars and Bloody Harlan

Violence had been a part of almost every uprising in the extractive industries, but the violence of the West Virginia mine wars of 1912-1921 reached a level unparalleled in American history. The wars officially began with a bitter strike in the towns of Paint Creek-Cabin Creek from 1912-1913. The veterans of that strike would become leaders of an even more notorious strike that began in 1919. One of the first outbreaks of violence occurred when agents of the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency came to Matewan, West Virginia, to evict fired pro-union miners and their families from housing owned by the Stone Mountain Coal Company. The detectives, who were infamous in the coal fields for their violent and legally dubious means of busting strikes, met opposition from the local police chief, Sid Hatfield and mayor Caleb Testerman. On May 19, 1920, Hatfield and a group of miners engaged the Baldwin-Felts agents in a gunfight in the business district of Matewan. Nine men died, including six detectives. Guerrilla skirmishing escalated across southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky in the summer of 1920 as the UMW struck for recognition, higher wages, and other elementary demands. At its peak, the magnitude of the armed forces arrayed in one place on each side of this struggle surpassed that in any previous North American labor dispute. Commencing on August 19, 1921, in Marmet, West Virginia, an army of approximately 6,000 miners and their allies set forth, heavily armed, on a march to aid their comrades in Logan and Mingo counties.

To resist this uprising, coal operators marshaled a force of roughly 2,000 sheriff's deputies and private agents. The operators also enlisted military power. After declaring the march an insurrection, West Virginia's Governor received federal assistance. President Warren Harding dispatched more than 2,000 US Army troops as well as aircraft from the 88th Light Bombing Squadron. When the combatants approached Logan County at the end of August, the total

[73] Norman H. Clark, *Mill Town: A Social History of Everett, Washington, from Its Earliest Beginnings on the Shores of Puget Sound to the Tragic and Infamous Event Known as the Everett Massacre* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970), 198-214; Robert L. Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods: The IWW in the Pacific Northwest* (Eugene: University of Oregon Books, 1967), 73-84.

number of belligerents had swelled to at least 10,000. For a week, fighting raged along several miles of battlefront on Blair Mountain. The army of sheriff's deputies, state militia, state police, and private mine guards resisted the miners with an armament that included machine guns and poisonous gas. On August 31, 1921, workers underwent aerial bombardment for the first time in the history of industrial relations in the United States. Finally, the authority of a presidential proclamation ordering the miners to disperse ended the uprising. This defeat contributed to the larger defeat of mining unionism in the expanding area of coal production south of the Ohio River in the years after World War I.[74]



Mug shots of convicted miners, from Conditions in the Paint Creek District, West Virginia, Part 1 *(West Virginia State Archives, Archives Collection)*

Despite the major loss in West Virginia, there was a resurgence of union activity in the bituminous coal fields of central Appalachia during the early years of the Depression. What had initially begun as a regional dispute developed into a national event, drawing the attention of labor, political, and even cultural leaders. This strike, in Harlan County, Kentucky, which lasted from 1931 to 1932, is also culturally significant. After company guards raided her house, Florence Reese, whose husband was a union organizer in Harlan County, composed the song "Which Side Are You On." Participants in the labor movement, Civil Rights Movement, Anti-Vietnam War movement, and even Occupy Wall Street have all adapted the song to their causes, making it one of the most recognizable songs in American political protest movements.

The coal industry in Harlan County, Kentucky, in the southeast corner of the state, had exploded during the second and third decades of the twentieth century. In 1911 only six mines were in operation; by 1932 that number had expanded to 71, with new mines continuing to open. The

[74] Lon Savage, Thunder in the Mountains: The West Virginia Mine War, 1920-21 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990); David Alan Corbin, Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 195-247; Fred Mooney, Struggle in the Coal Fields: The Autobiography of Fred Mooney, ed. J. W. Hess (Morgantown: West Virginia University Library, 1967), 71-78, 86-100; Winthrop D. Lane, Civil War in West Virginia: A Story of the Industrial Conflict in the Coal Mines (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1921); Daniel P. Jordan, "The Mingo War: Labor Violence in the Southern West Virginia Coal Fields, 1919-1922," in Essays in Southern Labor History: Selected Papers, Southern Labor History Conference, 1976, ed. Gary M. Fink and Merl E. Reed (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977), 102-43; Clayton D. Laurie, "The United States Army and the Return to Normalcy in Labor Dispute Interventions: The Case of the West Virginia Coal Mine Wars, 1920-1921," West Virginia History 50 (1991): 1-24.

population exploded accordingly: in 1911 only 169 miners were employed in the area, but by 1923 the number had jumped to 9,260. Much of this growth was attributable to the increased demand for coal during WWI. While the demand for coal was artificially inflated during the war years, an acute need for coal in Europe during the postwar recovery managed to keep the industry afloat through the 1920s. Another reason explaining the growth of mines in the region around Harlan County was a lack of unionization. Operators believed that non-union labor cut the costs of production, enabling them to become more competitive than the unionized coalfields in the North. As unionization efforts declined and stagnated during the 1920s, open-shop soft coal mines produced 80 percent of the total output of bituminous coal.

During the flush years, mining companies sent labor agents to recruit workers from surrounding areas. The promise of high wages, free transportation to the mines, and decent housing with electricity and running water was enough to lure local farmers to work underground. But the coal towns remained isolated from industrial centers. When hard economic times hit the region and coal towns lacked the tax revenue to support public assistance, residents could not seek assistance (or new jobs) elsewhere. Despite overseas demand for coal, by the late 1920s, the coal industry began to experience the pain of retraction after the overexpansion during the war years. Over the span of nine years, from 1924 to 1933, the number of employed miners in soft coal dropped by 400,000.

Trouble in Harlan first began during the winter of 1931. In February, the Black Mountain Coal Corporation declared a 10 percent wage reduction, which prompted miners to walk off the job in protest. This marked the beginning of what would be dubbed “The Battle of Evarts.” The UMW soon became involved and urged local miners to join the union for protection. On Sunday, March 1, 1931, William Turnblazer, the UMW president of District #19, organized a mass general meeting at the Gaines Theater in Pineville, Kentucky. Over 2,000 miners attended the meeting, filling the theater to capacity; those unable to enter listened from the outside.

The UMW during this period focused primarily on recruiting workers into the union rather than employing direct action techniques like strikes. This policy did not suit the more radically inclined miners, who demanded immediate redress for their grievances of underemployment and low wages. Despite the UMW’s conservative stance, the Black Mountain Coal Company responded to the organizing effort by firing any miners active in the union, an action that other mining companies in the region followed. Soon, around 500 activist miners had lost their jobs and homes in the company-owned towns. The nearby town of Evarts, an incorporated municipality, became the gathering point for evicted miners, who continued to work to organize the mines and sustain the strike that they had initiated.

As companies continued to evict miners and bring in strikebreakers, the tension reached a breaking point. Outbreaks of violence on either side occurred throughout the month of April, prompting Harlan County Judge D. C. Jones to assign a special grand jury to investigate the circumstances of the recent surge in violence. In the midst of this inquiry, between 300 and 400 union miners gathered at the Evarts Theater to discuss their plan of action. The following morning, May 5, a group of approximately 100 to 200 armed miners hid along the highway leading to the Black Mountain mines. When a group of ten deputy sheriffs in the employ of Black Mountain Coal drove into town, the miners attacked the cars after they passed the railroad junction; the company deputies responded with machine-gun fire. After the “Battle at Evarts”

ended, four people were dead and all the mines in town closed. Violence continued to plague the region in the months that followed. Companies launched a concerted effort against unionism, using violence, forced evictions, blacklists, raids, beatings, arrests, and other forms of intimidation as their principle tactics.

After the battle, coal companies still refused to allow unions to enter the mines. The UMW had become completely powerless, which created space for more radical unions to enter the field. The IWW was the first to attempt to fill the void, but local officials crushed any of their organizing efforts. The next group to enter the field was the communist-led National Miners Union (NMU), supported by the Chicago-based International Labor Defense (ILD). The NMU was the largest constituency of the Trade Union Unity League (the umbrella agency for all communist-based unions in the country). In July 1931, at a conference in Pittsburgh with twenty-eight representatives of the Harlan County coal camps in attendance, the NMU began an effort to organize all coalmines in the United States. The NMU specifically turned its attention to Harlan County on July 29, with a resolution affirming direct support for the striking miners.

On November 6, a group of writers led by Theodore Dreiser and including John Dos Passos came to Harlan County to investigate whether the miners' civil liberties were being obstructed during the strike. Despite the growing national spotlight, violence continued throughout the winter. On February 10, a deputy sheriff shot Harry Simms, an NMU organizer who came to speak at a miners' demonstration in Knox County. Simms died from his wounds on the following day. Leftwing activists in New York City called the shooting death an intentional murder. Simms's body was shipped to New York, and activists carried his coffin during a silent march on the Lower East Side. Afterwards, his body was displayed in the Bronx Coliseum, and became the centerpiece for a demonstration including over 10,000 leftwing activists. Yet, despite all this attention, the strike was ultimately a failure, and Communists left the coalfields in March of 1932.[75]

Taken together, the Harlan County Coal Strike, the Battle of Blair Mountain, the Bisbee Deportation, the Ludlow Massacre, the Battle of Evarts, and similar episodes form a pattern of conflict. Unlike industries where one or a small number of major confrontations punctuated labor-management relations, extraction's competitive economic conditions, routine risks of death on the job, isolation, and quasi-feudalism combined explosively to set the tone of industrial relations in the century up to World War II.

Organizing the Oil Fields

All forms of extractive labor contributed directly to the growing American economy, but by the mid-twentieth century perhaps the greatest contributor was oil drilling. Oil became central to both the growth of the American military and to the development of modern society. Even before WWI, the United States military converted its battle fleet from relying on coal to relying on oil for fuel. This switch enabled ships to travel both faster and for a longer duration; as such, oil allowed the navy to extend into the wide expanses of the Pacific Ocean. The invention of the oil-based combustion engine in the late nineteenth century, an invention that became the basis of

[75] Tony Bubka, "The Harlan County Coal Strike of 1931," *Journal of Labor History* 11, no. 1 (Winter 1970): 42-45, 47-50, 55.

technological developments in transportation by the twentieth century, revolutionized the American economy in addition to forever altering the nation's social and physical landscape.[76]





(L) ***Picket, oil plant at Muskogee, OK, 1939*** *(Russell Lee, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*
(R) ***Picket, oil workers' union. Seminole, OK, 1939*** *(Russell Lee, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

Oil drilling developed in pockets around the country, but the region in which this industry became dominant was in the South and Southwest, along the Gulf Coast. The Gulf Coast essentially became the home to the "world's largest concentration of petroleum refineries and chemical plants," according to historians Tyler Priest and Michael Botson.[77] The oil boom in the region began after the discovery of oil in Spindletop, Texas, in 1901. Shortly thereafter, Gulf Oil and Texaco established large refineries in the nearby areas of Port Arthur and Beaumont. As more oil was discovered along the coast, more refineries began to dot the landscape as far southwest as Corpus Christi and Houston, and eastward towards Lake Charles, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans in Louisiana. By the mid-1950s, Gulf Coast oil refineries were producing 32 percent of the nation's refined oil. For more than half of the twentieth century, the oil refining industry provided steady employment with good wages—if one was a White, male worker. In the Gulf area, the White racial category included both Anglos from east Texas and Cajuns from Louisiana. African Americans and Mexican Americans also found employment in this industry, although they were primarily restricted to segregated positions with little to no opportunity for advancement.[78]

Oil workers along the Gulf Coast, in New Jersey, and in California first launched a series of wildcat strikes during WWI demanding better working conditions and higher wages. The strikes occurred both in the oil fields and in refineries such as Standard Oil plants in Bayonne, New Jersey (1915), and Baton Rouge, New Jersey (1920); Gulf Oil's refinery in Port Arthur, Texas (1916); and Magnolia Oil's plant in Beaumont, Texas (1919). In the midst of these strikes, the International Association of Oil Field, Gas Well, and Refinery Workers of America received a

[76] David S. Painter, "Oil and the American Century," *The Journal of American History* 99, no. 1 (June 2012): 24-25.
[77] Tyler Priest and Michael Botson, "Bucking the Odds: Organized Labor in Gulf Coast Oil Refining," *The Journal of American History* 99, no. 1 (June 2012): 100.
[78] Priest and Botson, "Bucking the Odds," 100, 102.

charter from the AFL in 1918. While these efforts marked the beginning of oil workers attempts to organize, it took the drastic cuts in employment that occurred during the Depression for unions to make strong inroads into the industry. At this time, Priest and Botson argue, "The union movement in oil targeted refining, the least isolated and geographically dispersed sector of the industry." Eventually, Gulf Coast petroleum workers dissatisfied with the AFL's emphasis on craft-based unionism joined the CIO and became the Oil Workers' International Union (OWIU). This union would achieve a major victory by achieving union recognition in almost all the regional refineries in 1945. Workers would sustain this effort for the next ten years, such that oil workers in Louisiana and East Texas constituted the most sizable district of the union in the country.[79]

World War II provided a boon to oil workers, largely because of the important role that oil played in military operations. The wartime labor shortage also gave unionized oil workers leveraging power in bargaining. Among the many causes of their organizing success, one was the inclusion of minority workers. Although refineries engaged in segregated employment practices and were generally rife with racial tensions, they hired far more African American workers than most southern industries; the support that these workers provided to unions greatly contributed to organizing the industry. For instance, OWIU Locals 227 and 367 in Houston-Pasadena maintained an integrated membership roster, which enabled the union to win representation at the Sinclair, Shell, and Pan-American refineries in east Texas.[80]

Labor and Government Relations

Workers in the oil industry became emboldened to organize after the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933. Even after the Supreme Court invalidated the NIRA in 1935, the passage of the Wagner Act that same year, signaling federal support for workers' rights to collective bargaining, sustained workers' morale. Yet, success in organizing oil workers really came with the unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). While the CIO is known for organizing industries in the manufacturing sector—notably automobile and steel workers—it also made strong gains in extractive labor. One of the key figures in this effort was John L. Lewis, leader of the United Mine Workers.

[79] Priest and Botson, "Bucking the Odds," 101-03.
[80] Priest and Botson, "Bucking the Odds," 101, 105.



John L. Lewis, center, at a district meeting of the mine workers, Shenandoah, PA, 1938 *(Sheldon Dick, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

A towering figure in the history of American labor, Lewis made numerous contributions to national economic and political affairs. Between 1934 and the 1960s, the planning center and meeting place for some of Lewis's boldest initiatives was the general headquarters of the union in Washington, D.C. In 1934, the headquarters was located in the Tower Building at the corner of 14th and K Streets on Franklin Square. In 1936, the UMW moved to the University Club Building at 900 15th Street NW, which then became known as the United Mine Workers' Building. The headquarters had been relocated to Washington from Indianapolis, marking the increasing distance between the organization's top leaders and the rank-and-file. By all appearances a conventional urban office building, the structure conveys cultural conservatism. By selecting this building, Lewis, who wore three-piece suits and drove a Cadillac, projected a respectable image of business unionism. In this regard, the UMW president personified a tendency within the national leadership of American unions and within the working class as a whole in the mid-twentieth century.

But this conservative could be a militant organizer. The UMW president became increasingly exasperated with the unwillingness of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) to organize the mass-production industries. The refusal of the 1935 AFL convention to move decisive1y to recruit low wage industrial labor precipitated a historic initiative. On November 9, 1935, Lewis met at UMW headquarters with a small group of other dissident labor leaders to found the Committee for Industrial Organization. After three years of frenetic organizing and quarrels with the old guard, this committee broke away to become the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), with an aggregate membership of more than three million. Both architect and master builder of the CIO, John L. Lewis was elected its first president. Basic industries that eluded

unionization for decades were largely organized by the end of World War II. Blue-collar workers at last had both a collective voice and some measure of countervailing power against the giant corporations that had dictated the terms and conditions of their employment.

Another of Lewis's accomplishments arose in part from work done in the union headquarters. As an autocrat, Lewis manipulated the formal policy-making mechanisms of the union in setting and pursuing bargaining objectives. In the bituminous segment of the industry, Lewis executed a strategy of market unionism that aimed not only to raise the price of labor but, most remarkably, to rationalize the industry itself. His insistence on high, uniform labor rates drove soft-coal operators to accelerate mechanization. His single-minded devotion to high wage, capital-intensive production fostered labor organization in the chaotic bituminous fields. With the succession of master agreements between the UMW and the soft-coal operators that began in 1933, Lewis's vision of a stable, modernized, unionized industry was gradually achieved. That this accord required the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs and a precipitous deterioration in working conditions was, to the hard-nosed Lewis, the price of progress.[81]

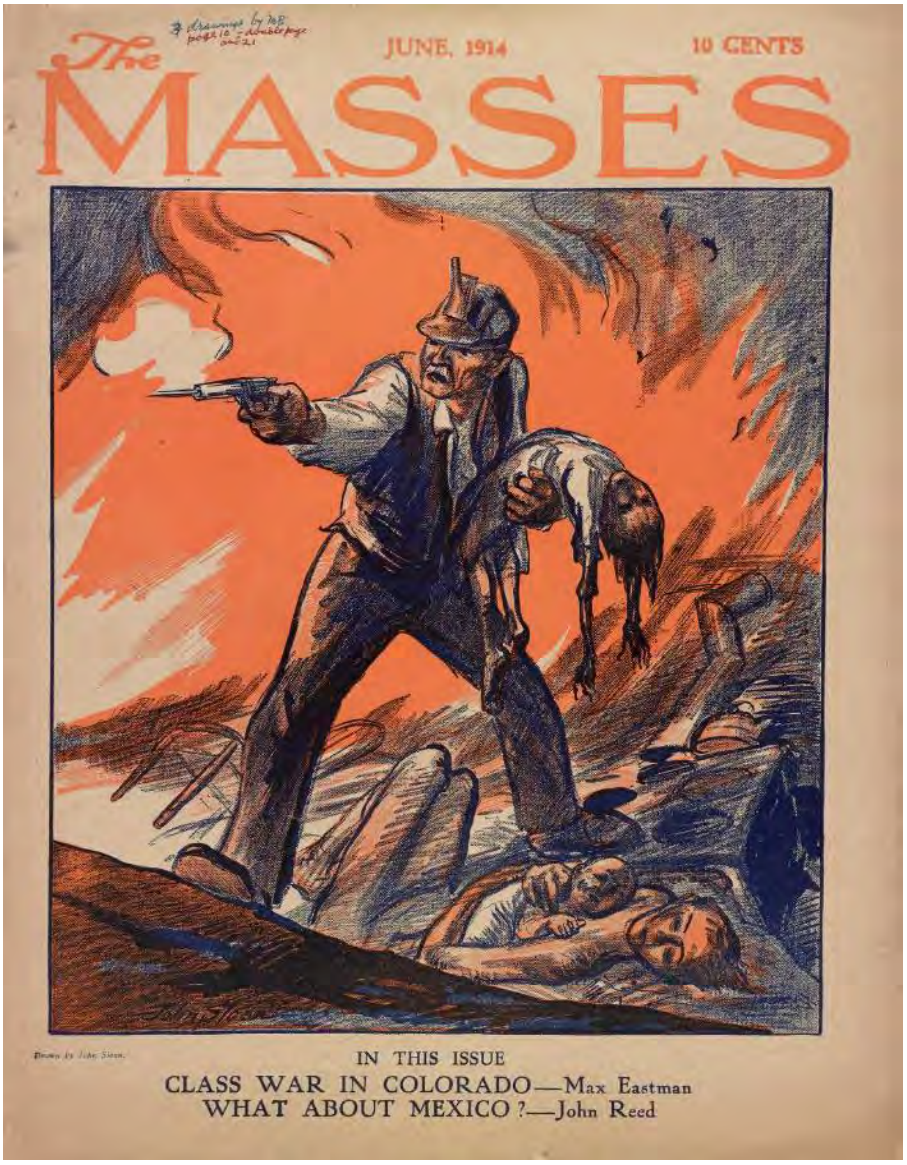
Like so many other accommodations in the volatile resource-based industries of the United States, Lewis's system offered no lasting truce between labor and capital. In this sector of the economy, no one group—union leaders, corporate managers, rank-and-file workers—could impose stability in the century after 1840. Instead, miners, lumberjacks, and petroleum workers experienced insecurity and remained vulnerable to threats to their jobs, their standards of living, and even their lives. Employed in competitive industries that pared labor costs, extractive workers faced a harsh economic calculus. Against this calculus, they upheld their own humanistic standards—mutuality, security, dignity, autonomy, and survival.

Conclusion

The history of extractive labor in the United States is both long and bloody. From the dangerous nature of the work itself to the pitched battles waged between unionists and management, workers in this industry experienced a level of violence almost unparalleled in any other industrial sector in the nation. In addition to large-scale disasters, extractive workers often faced the threat of silent killers like silicosis or black lung disease. Working in the extractive industries was hard and unpredictable, and workers' attempts to organize and achieve some degree of improvement in their working and living conditions were often met with brutal violence. Yet, without the extractive industries, and the workers who labored within them, the United States would not have been able to turn into an industrial superpower. In his overview of the history of the oil industry in the twentieth century, historian David Painter argues that "oil fueled American

[81] Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, *John L. Lewis: A Biography* (New York: Quadrangle, 1977); Robert H. Zieger, *John L. Lewis: Labor Leader* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988); Curtis Seltzer, *Fire in the Hole: Miners and Managers in the American Coal Industry* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1985), 34ff; David Brody, "Market Unionism in America: The Case of Coal," in Brody, *In Labor's Cause: Main Themes on the History of the American Worker* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 131-74; Morton S. Baratz, *The Union and the Coal Industry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955); James P. Johnson, *The Politics of Soft Coal: The Bituminous Industry from World War I through the New Deal* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979); Dix, *What's a Coal Miner to Do?*; John L. Lewis, *The Miners' Fight for American Standards* (Indianapolis: Bell Publishing, 1925).

power and prosperity."[82] The same can be said of the extractive industries as a whole from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution in the United States through the post-industrial era.



"Massacre during Colorado Coal Strike at Ludlow, Colorado," by John Sloan, front cover of <u>The Masses, a monthly magazine devoted to the interests of the working people</u>, June 1914 *(LOC P&P)*

[82] Painter, "Oil and the American Century," 24.

AMERICAN MANUFACTURING: SITES OF CONFLICT[1]



Detroit Industry Murals, north side, fresco by Diego Rivera,1932/32, Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit, MI *(undated photo by Cactus.man, public domain via Wikimedia Commons)*

The history of American manufacture is complex. Diversity in products and work environments is a hallmark of the country's industrial past. Americans produced a fabulous array of both specialized and standardized goods in many different kinds of settings. Scholars can delineate various stages of development, but the history of American manufacture is not linear. Old practices persisted as new revolutionary methods of production were introduced. Conflict—often bloody—between managers and workers shaped the process. America's industrial history was multifaceted and contested.

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[1] Walter Licht, Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania and Rachel Donaldson, Associate Professor of History at the College of Charleston prepared this context. Dr. Licht's expertise lies in the history of work and labor markets. His books include: *Working for the Railroad: The Organization of Work in the Nineteenth Century* (a 1983 Princeton University Press publication which received the Philip Taft Labor History Prize), the co-authored *Work Sights: Industrial Philadelphia, 1890-1950* (Temple University Press, 1986), *Getting Work: Philadelphia, 1840-1950* (Harvard University Press, 1992), and *Industrializing America: The 19th Century* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). Dr. Donaldson has published on the cultural politics of the folk music revival. Her books include *"I Hear America Singing": Folk Music and National Identity, 1930-1970* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014) and (co-authored with Ronald D. Cohen) *Roots of the Revival: American and British Folk Music in the 1950s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014). She is a historian of labor and cultural history and a historic preservationist.

As with other areas of labor history, manufacturing was a form of industry that tied together regions across the country. The nature of the work—from textile mills to steel mills—bore such similarities that workers in vastly disparate geographical areas shared similar experiences. This essay will therefore explore those experiences chronologically as well as thematically along craft lines.

Manufacture Before Industry

Before the commercialization of manufacture, the spread of wage labor, and the advent of the factory system, America manufactured goods in profusion. The home was a prime site of production. In the colonial period especially, family members produced cloth, garments, tools, and furniture for their direct use. Division of labor by generation and sex prevailed; adults and children, males and females had respective tasks. Families fashioned wares for their own use into modern times, in the countryside and in cities. All of this production went unrecorded in official counts of our nation's gross national product.

The artisan shop was another prime location of manufacture before greater industrialization. In cities such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, master silversmiths, cabinetmakers, and tailors produced fine items to order. The craft shop was a household. Living with masters and their families were apprentices and often journeymen who served for fixed periods of time. The apprentices labored for their masters and received lodging, board, and education in the so-called "mysteries" of the trades. Journeymen who completed their apprenticeships gained further instruction and experience as part of their passage to masterhood. The artisan shop represented an ideal of a society of yeoman producers whose very autonomy and dignified work made for their wise citizenry. Masters and their charges were hardly equals, but they shared a vision that service was but a step toward independent producership. A breakdown of craft practices in the early nineteenth century would generate the first labor protests in the country.[2] The ideal of the independent producer/citizen figured in a remarkable debate that transpired in the late eighteenth century, also before greater industrialization.

In the 1770s and 1780s, a small cohort of prominent Americans emerged to champion the cause of industry.[3] In pamphlets and newspaper articles they presented various arguments on behalf of increased manufacture. Americans would save money by manufacturing their own goods and reducing imports, dependence on Great Britain and the whims of British mercantile practices would be lessened, and the poor and indigent could be employed in industry. In the event that the new nation had to defend itself against military attack, a manufacturing base had to be established to produce the implements of war. Immigration, especially of skilled hands, would be encouraged, and industry and science could help improve agriculture. Two of the above points

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[2] Craftwork in the country is treated in Ian Quimby, ed., *The Craftsman in Early America* (New York: W. E. Norton, 1984); note 17 below cites major works on the nature of social relations and eventual conflict in the craftshop.

[3] The debate on manufacture in the late eighteenth century is treated in Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980) and John R. Nelson, Jr., *Liberty and Property: Political Economy and Policymaking in the New Nation, 1789-1812* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987). Opinion pieces of the day have been anthologized in Michael B. Folsom and Steven D. Lubar, eds., *The Philosophy of Manufactures: Early Debates over Industrialization in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982).

came to dominate the pro-manufacturing position: the role that industry could play in making the nation strong and independent, and the ability of manufacture to engage the idle, especially women and children who were deemed a population disproportionately poor and slothful. Thus, decades prior to women and children staffing America's first factories, industrial advocates linked women's and children's labor with manufacturing.

Advocates of manufacture faced stiff opposition. Prominent figures such as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison raised notable objections. As men of science and invention, they were not enemies to mechanical innovation; rather they saw the emergence of an industrial sector as a threat to the republic. In their minds, manufacture led to the growth of masses of property-less workers crowded into cities, hired cheaply without any greater obligations as to their welfare, and easily appealed to by ambitious politicians. Maintaining a republic meant fostering conditions under which a virtuous, public-minded citizenry would emerge that required an economic system based on independent and dignified work.[4]

The anti-manufacture position must be understood in the context of the American Revolution. For Jefferson and others, manufacture was only part of a greater evil. That evil was the recently overthrown mercantile political-economic order marked by royal despotism; court favor and corruption; aristocratic opulence; the privileging of the merchant community; rural depopulation and degeneration; and urban growth, poverty, and crisis. Industry meant either the great workshops of the crown that produced luxuries and encouraged venality or the urban manufactories employing the multitudes of displaced and poor of the society. The argument against manufacture, then, came as part of a critique of mercantilism, and nowhere is this better exemplified than in the controversy spawned by the creation of the Society for Establishing Useful Manufacture (SUM) in 1791.[5]

[4] Jefferson famously advocated for the agrarian ideal, believing that small, independent farmers epitomized the ideal republican citizen. For more information on the Jeffersonian "agrarian myth" and the impact that it had on American political ideology, see the introduction to the agricultural chapter in this study.

[5] A detailed history of the Society for Establishing Useful Manufacture (SUM) can be found in Joseph S. Davis, *Essays in the Earlier History of American Corporations, Numbers I-III* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917).



Passaic Falls, NJ, c. 1895 *(LOC P&P, Detroit)*

Tench Cox, the leading voice for manufacture at the time, had developed the idea for a large industrial experiment, and he conferred with Alexander Hamilton, who prevailed on a group of New York merchants and bankers to invest in the venture. A great industrial works with a series of mills for the manufacture of paper, shoes, pottery, beer, and textiles was to be built near the falls of the Passaic River in what would become the city of Paterson, New Jersey (Patterson, National Historic Landmark District, 1976). The investors organized as SUM received a charter of incorporation from the state legislature of New Jersey, which offered numerous privileges and immunities. Construction of raceways to power the mills began, but subsequent financial, management, and labor problems stopped the grand scheme in its tracks. The project provoked fierce attacks that had political repercussions for years.

Cox, a minister of government suspected of monarchist leanings, conspired with wealthy associates to create a private enterprise that received public privileges and a monopoly position. A manufacturing city with masses of wage laborers was to be erected in the pristine wilderness of the new republic. The assault in speeches, pamphlets, and the press that SUM endured severely stymied the development of manufacturing industries at the time. Jefferson and his supporters subsequently used the Paterson venture and other incidents in the 1790s to build a strong anti-Hamiltonian, anti-mercantilist political movement upholding small-producer ideals.

America had not even begun its industrial history, and manufacture had already emerged as a matter of contention. The late eighteenth century debate on manufacture reveals the anxieties and vying visions held by Americans at the dawning of their new republic. The debate would endure.

Paths: The Uneveness of Early Industrial Development

From the very beginning, the United States had no single industrial history. That fact has not prevented scholars from trying to devise singular explanations for the nation's initial rapid growth in manufacture. Some historians have found the trigger for early industrialization in geopolitical events. Entanglements in European wars in the first decades of the nineteenth century spurred efforts at lessening reliance on imported manufactured goods. Growing world demand for southern cotton with the revolution in textile production pushed plantation owners to direct almost all labor toward cotton agriculture. The South became dependent on the North for manufactured wares, and the money made from cotton was transferred north, fostering northern industrial development. Still, other scholars attribute our industrial rise to the impact of railroad construction and operations. In this vein of thought, the railroads created a national marketplace that encouraged manufacture with the railroads themselves as great consumers of manufactured goods (most notably iron and steel rails). Another group of historians finds the roots of industrialization in the prior commercial experience of the American people and their supposed innate entrepreneurialism. Finally, industrial growth has been attributed to the swelling of the American population in the nineteenth century from massive immigration and increased demand for manufactured goods. Faults can be cited for the above arguments—although the demographic argument rests on solid ground. In fact, any attempt at an easy answer will fail because of the varied history of industrialization in the United States.[6]

There is one causative factor that does deserve attention, and that is labor costs or, to be precise, the costs of skilled labor. A relative dearth of skilled labor in certain instances did prove an incentive to substitute capital for labor, thus driving industrial development.[7] Textile production in Lowell, Massachusetts, for example, necessarily took a highly mechanized form given a relative scarcity of weavers. In cities such as Philadelphia, where skilled labor was abundant, handicraft work persisted late into the nineteenth century.

The high cost of skilled labor played an important (and well publicized) role in gun manufacture. Guns traditionally had been fashioned by hand with individually crafted parts. Assembling the pieces required great time and effort, and skilled fitters could demand high wages and control the pace and quality of production. At the federal arsenals in Springfield, Massachusetts, and Harper's Ferry, Virginia, pressure emerged to assemble rifles faster and cheaper with standardized parts. The federal government subsidized innovations with new precision metal-cutting devices. Foreign visitors to these shores in the first decades of the nineteenth century

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[6] Competing explanations for America's early industrial rise can be found in Douglass C. North, *The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1961)*;* Walt Whitman Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1960); and Thomas Cochran, *Frontiers of Change: Early Industrialism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

[7] A key study on labor scarcity and American economic development is H. J. Habakkuk, *American and British Technology in the 19th Century: The Search for Labour-Saving Inventions* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1962).

were captivated by the adoption of standardized parts production techniques in the nation's public and private gunworks and dubbed what they saw as the "American system of manufacture." However, developments here did not unfold as smoothly as assumed by foreign reporters. For technical and other reasons, parts production remained imperfect for decades, and the skills of well-trained and paid assemblers were still required. Skilled mechanics also resisted attempts at regimenting their labor, and conflict marked such places as the arsenal at Harpers Ferry.[8]

A last consideration in the causes of early industrialization is the role of government. Federal, state, and local governments played a significant part in transportation developments of the nineteenth century. In manufacture, government had only a minor role. Manufacturing operations were generally family- or partnership-owned, and only a few received government-backed incorporation privileges. Private and public banks in the era offered short-term commercial loans by and large and did not support industrial ventures. Tariff policy remained inconsistent and contested, and, with the possible exception of iron and later steel production, no particular industrial trades owed their genesis or success to government protectionist policies.[9] Local judges during the early industrial period did make rulings that favored entrepreneurial activity, but even with this example, the place of government in American industrialization has to be deemed minimal.[10] Early and later advocates of manufacture had called for state promotion of industry, but anti-mercantilist politics continued to blunt government initiatives. The country industrialized along various courses and without overall direction.

America's manufacturing history can be dated to the first decades of the nineteenth century. Industrialization occurred without regard to the plans of advocates of manufacture or the misapprehension of their opponents. The industries that first emerged were largely centralized in New England. Primarily focusing on the manufacture of textile and shoes, the industries that began during this time established patterns that would come to characterize both the nature of production and the organization of workers' living space in much of the American manufacturing sector, regardless of the type of product being produced.

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[8] The uneven adoption of standardized parts production techniques in the United States is treated in Merritt Roe Smith, *Harpers Ferry Armory and the New Technology: The Challenge of Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977) and David A. Hounshell, *From the American System to Mass Production, 1800-1932: The Development of Manufacturing Technology in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

[9] The limited significance of tariffs in early industrialization is treated in the following key article: Paul A. David, "Learning by Doing and Tariff Protection: A Reconsideration of the Case of the Ante-Bellum United States Textile Industry," *Journal of Economic History* 30 (September 1970): 521-601.

[10] The role of the judiciary in economic development is treated controversially in Morton J. Horwitz, *The Transformation of American Law, 1780-1860* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977).



Slater Mill and environs, Pawtucket, RI, 1991 *(Joseph Elliott, LOC P&P, HAER RI-1)*

The Evolution of Mill Villages

Samuel Slater immigrated to the United States in 1789, and his services were in immediate demand. Slater had just finished an apprenticeship in a cotton mill in his native England, and he possessed rare knowledge in cotton textile technologies. In the United States, he soon found himself employed by the Brown family of Providence, Rhode Island, who were successful merchants. With the Browns' backing, Slater opened a cotton spinning mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, in 1793, commonly designated as the first successful mechanized spinning operation in the country. Within a short period, Slater and the Browns established a score of other cotton mills in the countryside of Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts.[11]

Slater was the most famous of a corps of British skilled mechanics who transferred the technical secrets of the new industrial age to the United States.[12] He helped forge a particular kind of production system. Because agriculture drew all available labor in the vicinity of his mills, Slater faced problems in staffing his operations. He resolved this problem by attracting and hiring

[11] The story of Samuel Slater and the creation of mill villages in Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts is told in Barbara Tucker, *Samuel Slater and the Origins of the American Textile Industry, 1790-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984) and Jonathan Prude, *The Coming of Industrial Order: Town and Factory Life in Rural Massachusetts, 1810-1860* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[12] The key role played by Slater and other artisans in transferring technological expertise and knowledge from Britain to the United States is related in David Jeremy, *Transatlantic Industrial Revolution: The Diffusion of Textile Technologies between Britain and America, 1790-1830s* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).

whole families. In so doing, Slater entered into contracts with male heads of households; wives and children would work in the mills, while fathers would be offered jobs in supervision, construction, farming on surrounding lands, or weaving in cottages provided by the company. Necessity forced Slater to rely on the family system of production, but experience played a role, too, for mills had been operating on the same basis in England. Slater created incorporated villages for the families in his hire, complete with company houses, stores, schools, and churches. However, the harmony he so desired did not grace his villages; strikes occurred and transience marked the communities.

Despite these problems, the mill village with the family system of labor became a basic component of American industrialization. By 1820, more than 400 mill communities had been established in the countryside of the middle Atlantic and New England states, some actually founded by former employees of Slater.[13] Many of these villages began to disappear in the late nineteenth century, but this form of industrial enterprise would proliferate at the same time as expansion of textile production in the South.



"View of Boott Cotton Mills at Lowell, Mass." Gleason's Pictorial, 1852 *(Lowell National Historical Park)*

Large-Scale Industrialization: The Single-Industry City

The titan of early American textile production, Francis Cabot Lowell, did not rely on immigrants to learn of new technologies. In 1810, he traveled to England to study industrial development

[13] Other studies of industrialization in the countryside include Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1978) and Judith A. McGaw, *Most Wonderful Machine: Mechanization and Social Change in Berkshire Paper Making, 1801-1885* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

first-hand. Lowell was a member of an established Boston merchant family. The strain and uncertainties of commerce had forced him to seek new investment opportunities. Lowell returned to the United States with the grand notion of constructing an integrated spinning and weaving mill using state-of-the-art machinery. With $400,000 pooled from other Boston elite families, he opened a successful spinning and weaving factory in Waltham, Massachusetts, in 1814. When waterpower at the site proved too limited for expansion, Lowell and his associates made plans to build a much larger industrial works at a new location, twenty-five miles north of Boston at the grand falls of the Merrimack River. Lowell would not live to see the awesome industrial city fashioned there from the 1820s to the 1850s that would bear his name (Lowell National Historical Park, 1978).[14]

Textile operations at Lowell, Massachusetts, represented a revolution in financial practices, organization of production, application of technology, and employment of labor. Use of the corporate form of ownership for an industrial enterprise was unique at the time, and staggering sums of money had been raised for investment. The consolidation of production also had no analogue. Under the roofs of the Lowell mills, cotton was cleaned, carded, spun, woven, and finished. The entire process was mechanized, but especially noteworthy was the wholesale adoption of power loom equipment. Finally, there was an extraordinary human story. More than 13,000 men and women had come to labor in the Lowell mills by 1850. The managers of the mills could not meet their labor needs by hiring families. They developed a special system of recruiting local farm girls to tend the machinery. Many of these young women saw employment in the mills as an escape from their rural homes, and they boarded in company dormitories. Their ultimate rebellion is a key chapter in the nation's labor history.



(L) ***Magazine Cover, Lowell Offering, a repository of writings by "Factory Girls," March 1845*** *(Lowell National Historical Park); (R)* ***Winslow Homer, "The Bobbin Girl," Appleton, 1871*** *(Lowell National Historical Park)*

[14] The building of the textile center of Lowell, Massachusetts, is treated in Robert F. Dalzell, *Enterprising Elite: The Boston Associates and the World They Made* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987) and Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

Lowell is often pictured as the epitome of American industrialization: large-scale, fully integrated and mechanized production of a standardized good with the use of a cheap labor source. Even among other examples of large-scale development, Lowell is not representative. Consider another case in point: nearby Lynn, Massachusetts, famed center of shoe production.

In 1870, Lynn looked like Lowell, with large, mechanized factories; but Lynn had an entirely different industrial history.[15] Farm families produced shoes there on a domestic outwork basis as early as the late eighteenth century. As demand for shoes increased in the nineteenth century, shoemaking became a full-time pursuit. Typically, shoemakers built small workshops attached to their homes; they continued to receive orders and materials from merchants and employed apprentices and journeymen to assist. A sexual division of labor survived. Women in the homes sewed the uppers of the shoes and men in the shops shaped soles and heels and fastened them to the uppers.

Centralization in production occurred in the 1830s, with merchants and enterprising shoemakers establishing large central shops or factories. Young women were hired to stitch the uppers, although married women in the home continued to stitch uppers under contract. Men still fastened the shoes in home workshops, but greater numbers came to labor in the new factory settings. The work still involved hand labor. Then in the 1860s, mill owners introduced the McKay stitcher, and larger mechanized factories appeared. The Lynn story is one of evolution, from domestic outwork to centralization and then mechanization and large-scale factory production; older arrangements continued to persist, though, with new developments. Lowell, on the other hand, emerged uniformly and fully industrialized.

While the textile industry began in New England, it did not remain bound in regional confines for long. Soon, textile mills began to appear in the South, particularly in the agricultural black belt of Alabama and the Piedmont region of North and South Carolina. The antebellum South was predominantly a region of plantation agriculture, but by 1860, the region had achieved manufacturing growth that accounted for 15 percent of the nation's industrial capacity. Slave labor played a significant role in the development of southern industry. By the Civil War, between 150,000 and 200,000 African American slaves were working in southern textile mills, as well as in iron works, tobacco processing plants, hemp factories, sugar refineries, and grain and lumber mills.[16]

Although slave labor was common in southern manufacturing before the Civil War, there were important exceptions, with the textile industry being a key one. In lengthy articles published in newspapers and journals such as *Debow's Review*, southern industrialists debated the issue of whether it was more advantageous for cotton mill owners to use slave or White labor. During the 1830s and 1840s, a significant number of southern mills ran on slave labor. Daniel Pratt and

[15] The complicated history of shoe production in Lynn, Massachusetts, is rendered in Paul G. Faler, *Mechanics and Manufacturers in the Early Industrial Revolution: Lynn, Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981); Alan Dawley, *Class Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); and Mary Blewett, *Men, Women, and Work: Class, Gender, and Protest in the New England Shoe Industry, 1780-1910* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

[16] A few industrialists warned against the use of slave labor, predicting that slaves would be inefficient or become unruly in an industrial setting. The majority of southern manufacturers ignored such admonishments and relied heavily on slave labor.

William Gregg, two pioneering leaders in the development of the southern textile industry, however, began to rely on free White labor. Gregg, who wrote extensively on the subject, initially favored slave labor but later changed his position after commencing operations with White labor at his Graniteville factory in 1849. Other mill owners were already discontinuing use of slave labor, and by 1860 only one mill in South Carolina, Daniel McCullough's factory at Mount Dearborn, had a slave labor force. The critical factor that ultimately tipped the scales in favor of White workers was the rising cost of slaves. With the expansion of the cotton belt into the southwestern frontier, the demand for slaves outpaced the supply, causing prices to begin rising at a steady rate in the 1820s.[17] By 1850, White labor offered a significant cost savings over slaves.[18]

Pratt's mill at Prattville, Alabama, and Gregg's operations at the Vaucluse and Graniteville mills in the Horse Creek Valley of South Carolina drew from the model of industrial paternalism well established in New England. The company towns established by Pratt and Gregg provided workers with housing, schools, and churches to create stable communities. Contrary to the prevalent myth about the southern yeomanry's preference for agrarian life, neither Gregg nor Pratt had trouble recruiting workers. The families who came to work in the mills left marginal farms to seek a better life working for wages. Whether or not they found it is another question. Dependable workers proved elusive for Pratt and Gregg. Rates of turnover at antebellum cotton mills were extremely high, often as much as 150 percent per year.

Specialization and the Diversified Manufacturing Center

Despite the South's growing textile industry, the region would not begin to fully develop its manufacturing centers until after Reconstruction, when the New South industrialists began to dominate regional politics. During the early years of American manufacturing, Lowell and Lynn provided the visible evidence of America's leap into industry. Visitors to the nation's most populated cities, New York and Philadelphia, might have been surprised to learn that they were centers of manufacture. The metropolitan skyline in the mid-nineteenth century revealed a few factory buildings, but nothing on the order of the Lowell mills.

A deliberate investigation, however, would find production flowing everywhere: in cellars and attics, tenement flats, and artisan shops, as well as in a proliferation of indistinguishable small- and medium-sized manufactories. Describing industrial growth in places like New York City, Philadelphia, and Newark, New Jersey, is difficult. There are no leading figures (such as a Slater or Lowell), no single trades (textiles or shoes), and no particular inventions to anchor the story. Thousands of separate stories of enterprise have to be told. Taken together, they add up to a whole. Four characteristics mark the metropolitan path to industrialization.[19]

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[17] This was partly because a federal ban on the importation of new slaves went into effect on January 1, 1808.

[18] Ernest M. Lander, Jr., *The Textile Industry in Antebellum South Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 55-62, 88-93.

[19] A critical study of the diversified manufacturing city is Philip Scranton's *Proprietary Capitalism: The Textile Manufacture at Philadelphia, 1800-1885* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983). The opening chapters of the following books also provide fine treatments of uneven industrial development in metropolitan areas: Susan E. Hirsch, *Roots of the American Working Class: The Industrialization of Crafts in Newark, 1800-1860* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1978); Bruce Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850*

The first is product diversity. A remarkable manifest of goods poured from the workshops of New York and Philadelphia, including paints, varnishes, hats, caps, tools, garments, fine instruments, fancy cloth, drugs, jewelry, books, bricks, and tiles. A second characteristic is diversity of work settings, as noted above. Similar goods issued from sweatshops as well as factories, and some items in their completion might pass through several different work environments. Specialization in both operations and products is a third component of the urban production system. Fully integrated enterprises on the order of the Lowell mills were more the exception than the rule; separate establishments emerged as the pattern. Rather than produce coarse standardized goods, city firms prospered by manufacturing small-batch custom items to the specifications of their clients. The small to medium-sized family-owned and managed business was a fourth critical feature of metropolitan industrialization. In 1860, in a city such as Philadelphia, the average industrial worker labored in a unit of eight employees, and the corporate form of ownership was a rarity.

Diversified products and work settings, specialized production, and the prevalence of proprietorships characterized the mid-nineteenth century urban industrial system. Insufficient waterpower, a relatively large skilled labor base, avoidance of competition with large-scale producers, and entrepreneurship of native-born and immigrant artisans are among the factors that contributed to this kind of industrial history.

Labor Protest in the Early Industrial Period

Changes in old work arrangements and the harsh conditions of new factory work spurred protest among American working people during the antebellum period. No agitation occurred over the new machinery of the age. The United States witnessed fewer incidences of machine-breaking than was prevalent in Europe. In this country, machines did not displace workers, but filled a vacuum. Rather, the issue was the changing nature of social relations wrought by the spread of the wage labor system.

Protest first emerged in the artisan shops of the new republic.[20] Increased market activity and demand for manufactured goods at the turn of the nineteenth century forced changes in the organization of work in the craft shop. Enterprising master craftsmen soon opted to produce coarse goods. They were joined by merchants who gathered outworkers into new centralized shops. Both affected divisions of labor in their enterprises, hiring workers on a daily basis, and assuming no other obligation to them than compensation for specific completed tasks. Change

(Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); and Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

[20] Artisan life and consciousness has recently received the significant attention of historians. Key studies include Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Howard Rock, *Artisans of the New Republic: The Tradesmen of New York City in the Age of Jefferson* (New York: New York University Press, 1979); Bruce Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*; Charles Steffens, *The Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution, 1763-1812* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); William Rorabaugh, *The Craft Apprentice: From Franklin to the Machine Age in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers: Labor in 19th-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989); and Ronald Schultz, *The Republic of Labor: Philadelphia Artisans and the Politics of Class, 1720-1830* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

did not occur suddenly or evenly, but general transformations signaled an end to craft practices and customary relations between masters and their journeymen and apprentices.

Journeymen responded. At the turn of the nineteenth century, journeymen tailors, carpenters, and shoemakers launched isolated, short work stoppages to protest deteriorating conditions. They and other skilled workers began to transform fraternal societies they had formed into bargaining agencies. The Federal Society of Cordwainers, established in Philadelphia in 1794, evolved into what is considered the nation's first bona fide trade union and conducted the first organized strike of American workingmen in 1799. Members of the same organization seven years later would be embroiled in the first legal trial in the United States involving the rights of union workers. The cordwainers were found guilty of conspiracy under common law, of concerted action to injure others, and restraining trade. The defeat of the cordwainers in 1806 did not still the determination of journeymen to organize. The right of workingmen to form unions and collectively demand improvements in working conditions remained a hazy and disputed legal matter until federal protections were afforded workers in the 1930s. The cordwainers case, however, introduced the threat and actuality of judicial restraint to organized labor activity.

The nascent trade union movement faced greater economic obstacles than legal ones. Periodic economic downturns depleted membership and resources. Harmonies persisted between master craftsmen and their journeymen as both rallied under the banner of a small producers' democracy. Business expansion in the 1820s, however, brought new pressures to change old ways of production, and relations between masters and their charges ruptured anew. The decade would witness a vast surge in protest activity of craft shop workers.[21]

Journeymen in Philadelphia led the way again. Organized shoemakers, carpenters, and other craft workers in the Quaker city formed the nation's first federated body of unions, the first labor newspaper, *The Mechanics' Free Press*, and first labor party, the Working Men's Party of Philadelphia. The movement spread. By the early 1830s, journeymen in such far-flung places as Brunswick, Maine, and Zanesville, Ohio, had revived or formed new unions as well as local federations, labor journals, and workingmen's parties. The period saw numerous strikes—some general and large-scale—and labor political activism.

There are notable aspects to the protests of the men of the shops. The sites of their demonstrations were not individual firms, but whole trades, and, more importantly, the community at large. Craftsmen activists represented the poor treatment they now experienced at the hands of their masters-turned-manufacturers as a threat to republican ideals. Their party platforms called for the creation of free, common school systems of education as well as the abolition of debtors' prisons, prohibitions on chartered and licensed monopolies, and direct election of political authorities. At the workplace, they demanded the ten-hour workday and restrictions on the employment of non-apprenticed labor.

The burgeoning antebellum protest movement of journeymen proved short-lived. Internal squabbling over tactics and positions sapped the cause. Mainstream politicians easily absorbed

[21] Material on labor activism in the 1820s and 1830s is contained in the above works, but also notably in Walter Hugins, *Jacksonian Democracy and the Working Class: A Study of the New York Workingmen's Movement* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960) and Edward Pessen, *Most Uncommon Jacksonians: The Radical Leaders of the Early Labor Movement* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1967).

their message, and an economic downturn starting in 1837 rendered a sharp blow. But most important, the ideology of the journeymen was exclusive. They valued craft labor and equal citizenship, but these were experiences only open to White men of skill and excluded women, African Americans, immigrants, common day laborers, and factory hands. Their inability to reach others through the expanding and diversified industrial work force blunted their efforts.[22]

Labor protest also erupted in the new factories of the republic, where factory workers did not wait for or need leadership from the urban craft shops. This history has an important twist: American wage-earning women organized and participated in the first demonstrations of American industrial workers.[23]

The hope had been that harmony would prevail in the textile city of Lowell, Massachusetts, but events did not unfold according to plan. Boardinghouses intended as wholesome environments for young women recruited from the countryside to work in the mills proved to be perfect centers for organizing protest. The mills themselves served as places to build labor solidarity. Increased competition in the industry in the 1830s forced mill owners to reduce costs by lowering wages, lengthening the workday, speeding the machinery, and increasing work assignments. The stage was set for conflict. Rumors of wage reductions in February 1834 brought the first protest as 800 women walked out. Two years later, announced increases in room and board charged by the companies generated a work stoppage of close to 3,000 female operatives. In both cases, massive street rallies and demonstrations were held, the kind not seen in New England since the American Revolution. In the 1840s, Lowell's female mill workers spearheaded a region-wide petition to pressure government for ten-hour workday legislation.

Women shoemakers in Lynn, Massachusetts, picked up the gauntlet. Women stitching leathers at home on an outwork basis remained isolated, but this did not prevent them from organizing in the early 1830s to demand uniform piece-rate schedules and better pay. Protest in Lynn, however, was shaped by the very uneven industrialization of shoemaking. Men working in centralized shops formed a union in the 1840s, but invited the women working at home to join them only on an auxiliary basis. Meanwhile, young, unmarried female factory hands also began to organize in the 1850s but found their demands often at cross-purposes with both the men and the older women domestic outworkers. Skill, gender, and location divides did not prevent an industry-wide strike involving more than 10,000 shoemakers to unfold in February 1860—the largest labor protest of the early industrial period—but these divisions contributed to the strike's demise.

The early industrial period saw great labor organizing and strife—the wage labor and factory systems brought resistance—but the protest was episodic. The vicissitudes of the economy greatly affected labor organizing during the era. Skill, gender, and ethnic divides took their toll. Labor ideology of the day upheld the views of a mutualistic, small producer's republic, not the

[22] The exclusive nature of artisan ideology and the contribution of organized white workingmen to racial divisions in the antebellum period is well analyzed in David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991).

[23] The protests of industrial workers in the 1830s and 1840s, particularly of female workers, is vividly rendered in Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work*; Mary Blewett, *Men, Women, and Work*; and David Zonderman, *Aspirations and Anxieties: New England Workers and the Mechanized Factory System, 1815-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

views or circumstances of all working people. Most importantly, the unevenness of industrial development impeded a larger, uniform response.




(L) ***Founded in 1871, the Michigan Stove Company was the largest of six stove manufacturers operating in Detroit at the turn of the twentieth century, c. 1915*** *(LOC P&P, Detroit) (R)****Toledo, OH, c. 1905*** *(LOC P&P, Detroit)*

An Industrial Heartland

By the Civil War, the United States had made great strides in manufacture. Still the country lagged behind Great Britain, France, and Germany in industrial output. The decades after the war's end witnessed an unprecedented expansion. By the turn of the twentieth century, industrial production in the United States would surpass the combined manufacture of its three main rivals. Between 1860 and 1900, manufacturing output increased five-fold, growing from 32 percent to 53 percent of the nation's gross product, and the industrial work force expanded from 1.5 to 5.9 million workers.[24]

The story of American industrialization in the late nineteenth century is one of extensive growth. While gains in productivity occurred with new technologies, most of the growth in manufacture of the period can be attributed simply to more firms and more people producing more goods. A critical ingredient in this expansion was the geographical spread of enterprise that built a wide and remarkable belt of industry through New England, the Middle Atlantic states, and, most notably for the era, the Midwest.

New York City, Philadelphia, and Newark, New Jersey, remained dominant manufacturing centers in the late nineteenth century. Diversified products and work settings, specialization in products and processes, and small-to-medium sized, family-owned and operated firms continued as hallmarks of industry in the metropolis. Garment sweatshops and larger apparel works were

[24] Figures comparing the industrial records of Great Britain, France, Germany, and the United States in the later 19th century are drawn from Walt Whitman Rostow, *The World Economy: History and Prospect* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978).

particularly prominent as sites of increased labor conflict and unionizing, and as grist for social reformers who petitioned for the government regulation of working conditions.[25]



(L) ***"BARBOUR'S FLAX THREAD WORKS: PATERSON, NEW JERSEY," advertising lithograph, ca. 1880-1889*** *(LOC P&P, HAER NJ-11-A); (R)* ***Paterson, N.J. from Water Works Parks, c. 1904*** *(LOC P&P, Detroit)*

A line of new industrial cities that paralleled the Atlantic Coast joined the great eastern manufacturing centers. Wilmington, Delaware, for example, prospered after the Civil War in shipbuilding, railroad car construction, carriage making, and, most important, leather tanning. Further north, Trenton, New Jersey, became famed for iron and steel, wire cable and ceramic goods (dishes as well as sanitary ware—sinks, tubs, and toilets). Paterson, New Jersey, had been slated for industrial prominence since the days of Alexander Hamilton and the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures. Little came of that venture, but, by the time of the Civil War, the city housed successful locomotive works and cotton mills. After the Civil War, Paterson would thrive as "Silk City," the leading center of silk textile production in the United States. Nearby Passaic would emerge as a woolen textile center.[26]

Further north, the city of Bridgeport sat at the base of an important valley of industry. North of the city, a band of towns appeared around Waterbury, which served as the capital of brass and brass product manufacture in the United States. The area also led in clock and watch manufacture. Bridgeport itself became famous for the production of specialized metal goods, particularly machine tools, rifles, and ammunition casings. Furthest east, Providence, Rhode

[25] On work in the garment trades, particularly for women, in such cities as New York and Philadelphia, see Joan Jensen and Sue Davidson, eds., *A Needle, A Bobbin, A Strike!: Women Needleworkers in America* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1984).

[26] On the new industrial cities in the Middle Atlantic coastal region, see: Carol E. Hoffecker, *Wilmington, Delaware: Portrait of an Industrial City, 1830-1910* (University Press of Virginia, 1974)*;* John Cumbler, *A Social History of Economic Decline: Business, Politics, and Workers in Trenton* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989); and Philip Scranton, ed., *Silk City: Studies on the Paterson Silk Industry, 1860-1940* (Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1985).

Island emerged as a proud center of manufacture. Tools, steam engines, jewelry, and silverware fashioned in Providence factories were respected around the world.[27]

Greater New England remained a textile center, with large, fully integrated facilities as well as a few surviving mill villages. Lowell, Massachusetts, however, became dwarfed by new textile cities in the region. Just to the east, Lawrence, Massachusetts, grew in woolens production and would house three of the four largest textile mills in the country. The largest would be found north of Lowell in Manchester, New Hampshire, where Boston investors created the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company, a massive enterprise of 30 buildings with 17,000 employees by the turn of the twentieth century. South of Lowell would appear another rival, Fall River, Massachusetts, a city that featured steam-engine powered mills that utilized the latest automated technologies. Serious labor disputes marked Fall River as skilled operatives resisted the new regimen. Smaller textile centers, such as Woonsocket, Rhode Island, joined the fold. North of Connecticut, textile manufacture dominated, with the notable exceptions of Lynn, Massachusetts—still the nation's leading shoemaking city—and Worcester, Massachusetts, which emerged in the late nineteenth century as a major diversified manufacturing city with a notable metal trades industry.[28]

To the west, during the same period, a new and impressive industrial heartland opened across upstate New York along a 350-mile corridor that embraced the Erie Canal. Iron manufacturing centers appeared in Albany and Troy; locomotive works and electrical goods manufacturing in Schenectady; textile and garment production in Utica; copper production in Rome; garments, shoemaking, and photographic equipment in Rochester; and iron and steel production in Buffalo. Centers for shoemaking, glassblowing, and railroad car construction similarly appeared across the lower tier of New York.[29]

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[27] For new industrial cities along coastal New England, see: Cecilia Bucki, "Dilution and Craft Tradition: Munitions Workers in Bridgeport, Connecticut, 1915-1919," in *The New England Working Class and the New Labor History*, eds. Herbert G. Gutman and Donald H. Bell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Jeremy Brecher et al., *Brass Valley: The Story of Working People's Lives and Struggles in an American Industrial Region* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982); and Judith E. Smith, *Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900-1940* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

[28] For New England textile centers in the late nineteenth century see the following studies: Donald B. Cole, *Immigrant City: Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1845-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963); Ardis Cameron, *Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1860-1912* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Tamara Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship Between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); John Cumbler, *Working-Class Community in Industrial America: Work, Leisure, and Struggle in Two Industrial Cities* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979); Gary Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For Lynn, Massachusetts, see Mary Blewett, *Men, Women, and Work*. For Worcester, Massachusetts, see Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[29] Economic and social life in industrial cities along the Erie Canal in upstate New York are pictured in such works as Daniel Walkowitz, *Worker City, Company Town: Iron and Cotton-Worker Protest in Troy and Cohoes, New York, 1855-84* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Brian Greenberg, *Worker and Community: Response to Industrialization in a 19th-Century American City, Albany, New York, 1850-1884* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985); Carole Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City: Gender, Class, and Community in Troy, New York, 1864-86* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); and Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).



Homestead Steel Works, Homestead, PA, between 1900 and 1910 *(LOC P&P, Detroit)*

Throughout the nineteenth century, Pennsylvania remained the leading industrial state in the nation in terms of output and production. A line of industrial cities emerged west of Philadelphia, with Reading as a machine shop and textile town, and Harrisburg and Johnstown as iron and steel production centers. But it was in the far west of the state that Pittsburgh emerged as an industrial colossus. By the onset of the Civil War, Pittsburgh had already become the leading glass producing center in the country. In the last decades of the century, the city's great new fame would be based on iron and steel manufacture that accounted for one-sixth of the nation's iron and steel output. Pittsburgh's steel plants would also serve as sites for key battles of the age between capital and labor.[30]

Ohio is often viewed as an agriculture state, but, in the late nineteenth century, Ohio was awash with industry. In 1880, 60 percent of the state's working population was employed in its widespread manufactories. Major industrial cities dominated the view. Cincinnati was a diversified manufacturing center famed for furniture, wagons, coffins, plug tobacco, boots, shoes, clothing, and meat processing and soap. Cleveland came to rival Buffalo and Pittsburgh as an iron and steel producing giant. Yet Cincinnati and Cleveland were joined by a host of smaller industrial cities, many diversified but also known for particular goods: Canton for watches, Springfield for agriculture machinery, Youngstown and Akron for rubber, Toledo for steel, Dayton for office machinery, and East Liverpool for pottery.[31]

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[30] Gerald Eggert, *Harrisburg Industrializes: The Coming of Factories to an American Community* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993) offers a detailed portrait of a medium-size industrial city in south central Pennsylvania. Key works on Pittsburgh, the steel industry, and social life and conflict in this American industrial colossus include: David Brody, *Steelworkers in America: The Nonunion Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960); Frank G. Couvares, *The Remaking of Pittsburgh: Class and Culture in an Industrializing City, 1877-1919* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984); and Paul Krause, *The Battle for Homestead, 1880-1892: Politics, Culture, and Steel* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992).

[31] The spread of industry through Ohio is well portrayed in Raymond Boryczka and Lorin Lee Cary, *No Strength without Union: An Illustrated History of Ohio Workers, 1803-1980* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1982). An excellent study of industrialization in Cincinnati is Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure, and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

The path of industry in the late nineteenth century passed widely through Ohio but skipped largely over Indiana (in the twentieth century, the state would see the building of massive steel works in Gary and electrical works in Fort Wayne). Detroit, Michigan, appeared as a diversified manufacturing center and joined Pittsburgh as an industrial giant when the city became the world's capital for automobile manufacture after the turn of the century.[32] Before 1900, Grand Rapids, Michigan overshadowed Detroit as an industrial center, as the leading furniture producing center in the country.

Further west, Milwaukee achieved fame in beer making, and places such as Davenport, Iowa, and Moline, Illinois in the manufacture of farm machinery. But dominating the industrial map at the western end of America's new belt of industry was Chicago, a city that, like Pittsburgh, epitomized the country's ascendance in manufacture after the Civil War. Economic activity in Chicago centered on receiving, processing, and marketing plant and animal resources from the city's vast and bountiful hinterland, and in providing services for rural neighbors, near and far.[33] Industry in Chicago initially involved the processing of Midwest and West land and forest products: lumber and flour milling, tanning, soapmaking, and meatpacking. In the late 1860s, Chicago's meatpackers invested millions of dollars in building large, mechanized packing houses to facilitate a mass slaughter of pigs and cows and an amount of meat cutting never before contemplated. Tens of thousands of workers were employed along the de-assembly lines of what became Chicago's notorious stockyards.

In the late nineteenth century, new industries appeared in Chicago not directly related to the processing of agricultural goods. Nearby iron and coal reserves allowed the city to emerge as an iron and steel-producing rival to Pittsburgh. Large, centralized clothing factories appeared (several to be the sites of key strikes of garment workers in the first decades of the twentieth century). Chicago housed the mammoth McCormick Reaper Works, the largest producer of farm equipment in the world. A strike of McCormick workers in May of 1886 played a role in the famous Haymarket Affair (Haymarket Martyrs' Monument, NHL, 1997).

Chicago anchored the western end of a wide swath of industry that covered New England, the Middle Atlantic States, and the Midwest. The South remained largely outside the history of American heavy industrialization. The postbellum period saw significant increases in textile production, with mill villages populated by poor White farm families sprouting in the Piedmont—an area stretching from southern Virginia through central North and South Carolina and into northern Georgia and Alabama. Birmingham, Alabama, emerged as an iron and steel processing center (Sloss Furnace, NHL, 1981).[34] Still, by 1900, with 30 percent of the nation's

[32] For Detroit, see Olivier Zunz, The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) and Richard Oestreicher, Solidarity and Fragmentation: Working People and Class Consciousness in Detroit, 1875-1900 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

[33] The literature on Chicago is voluminous; William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991) is a later comprehensive work that analyzes Chicago's pivotal role in the greater Midwest and western development.

[34] An overview of industrialization in the south after the Civil War is provided in James C. Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877-1984* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984). Textile mill building in the Piedmont region is described in David L. Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982). For developments in Birmingham, Alabama, see Carl V. Harris, *Political Power in Birmingham, 1871-1921* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977).

population, the South contributed less than 10 percent of the country's industrial output. Limited southern industrialization was due to a late start in industry, control by Northerners of critical investments, poor technological wherewithal, the continuing pull of cotton agriculture, the racial politics of the region, the area's low wage base and little incentives to substitute capital for labor, and the reluctance of landowning and commercial elites to see the formation of a potentially rebellious industrial work force.[35]

Three aspects of Northeast and Midwest industrial development deserve mention. First, the array of goods that flowed from American manufactories must be appreciated. Scholars stress the emergence of capital goods industries in the period, a development that marks postbellum industrialization. Steel production and machine building assumed a great place in American manufacture in the later period, yet it is product diversity that demands emphasis. Americans produced clothing, ceramics, jewelry, and beer in profusion.

Second, the contribution of America's smaller industrial cities should be noted. Attention focuses on larger cities like Pittsburgh and Chicago. But an important aspect of America's great leap in manufacture in the last decades of the nineteenth century is the production that occurred in the nation's seeming nooks and crannies. Fine, diverse, and plentiful products sprang forth from the shops and factories of places such as Zanesville, Ohio, and Grand Rapids, Michigan. In fact, half of the industrial work force of the period resided and labored in such cities.[36]

[35] The role of southern elites in limiting economic development in the region is discussed and debated in Jonathan Weiner et al., "Class Structure and Economic Development in the American South, 1865-1955," *American Historical Review* 84 (October 1979): 970-1006; and Steven Hahn, "Class and State in Post-Emancipation Societies: Southern Planters in Comparative Perspective," *American Historical Review* 95 (February 1990): 75-98.

[36] On the geography of late nineteenth-century industrialization and the importance of middle range cities, see David R. Meyer, "Midwestern Industrialization and the American Manufacturing Belt in the 19th Century," *Journal of Economic History* 49 (December 1989): 921-937.



Manchester Mills, Manchester, NH, engraving c. 1880 *(LOC P&P, HABS NH-109)*

Large-Scale Enterprise

The geographical spread of manufacturing represents one notable feature of late nineteenth-century industrialization. The emergence of large-scale industrial works in the period is another. The typical manufacturing enterprise in 1860 was small, family-owned and operated (perhaps a partnership), specialized, labor intensive, and a producer of small batches of goods sold in local and regional markets. The classic proprietorship persisted and proliferated in small town and metropolitan America and contributed to the country's industrial success. By 1900, however, another kind of manufacturing business dominated the landscape. These large, corporate-owned, bureaucratically-managed, multifunctional, and capital-intensive enterprises marketed mass-produced items nationally and even internationally.

Several factors contributed to the rise of large industrial works in the late nineteenth century.[37] Expanding railroad construction and operations created a national marketplace. Specialized firms survived by catering to niche markets, but producers of more standardized goods encountered stiff competition and could not function in isolation. Competition drove manufacturing firms to attend to new activities—accessing raw materials and deliberate product marketing. They grew vertically. Companies also met the challenge of competition by trying to reach agreement with their rivals—to apportion market spheres and set floors on prices. This initially took the form of private accords, but renewed competition demanded more formal arrangements: trade association pacts, holding companies, and trusts. When all else failed—when competition within trades

[37] The brief overview of the rise of large-scale industrial enterprise in the late-nineteenth century is largely based on the important work of the business historian Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. Chandler's key studies include: *Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of Industrial Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962); *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1977); and *Scale and Scope: The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1990).

could not be curbed through associational activity—there was the last resort of merging to buy out firms and create huge conglomerated enterprises. Thus, firms also grew horizontally.

Technical considerations played a role in firm expansion. Large-scale enterprises tended to prevail in industries where standardized goods were produced and where machines could easily replace hand labor. Examples of these enterprises include petroleum, plant oil, chemical, sugar, alcohol distilling and refining, iron, steel, cooper, aluminum manufacture, grain, and tobacco processing. Large-scale companies typically did not appear or succeed in apparels, textiles, shoes, lumber, furniture, leather, machine tools, and printing. Changing, small-batch, custom orders dominated in these trades and were not handled well in the large firm setting.

Finally, there was a managerial side to the rise of big business. Many large-scale manufacturing enterprises formed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries failed—National Cordage, Consolidated Tire, and many others entered the dustbin of history. Financiers had no intentions of establishing and managing ongoing concerns, but rather aimed at immediate killings in the stock market. Technology created the potential for bona fide large-scale enterprises to succeed, but great managerial acumen was required. Hidden in the story of the emergence of large industrial concerns is the work of a new managerial class who developed—through a good deal of trial and error—effective sales strategies, appropriate organizational schemes, production systems, accounting procedures, company rules and regulation, and feedback and forecasting methods that made the new behemoths run smoothly.[38]

[38] The role of appointed managers in sustaining the corporations is the major theme of Alfred Chandler's *The Visible Hand*.



"New England Factory Life," illustration of workers at Washington Mills, Lawrence, MA, from Harper's Weekly July 25, 1868 *(Lowell National Historical Park)*

Creating a Labor Force

Large-scale industry in the post-Civil War era would not have been possible without the mobilization of a massive workforce. Two major social patterns made the emergence of centers of industry possible: immigration and migration. While the former played a significant role in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the latter played a crucial role in the history of manufacturing post-World War I, after the United States largely closed its borders to workers coming from other nations.

With fertility declines in the nineteenth century, immigration represented the prime means of population growth and served to boost demand for manufactured goods. Increases in output in the period can be directly correlated to population increases. American immigrants provided labor for an expanding American industry. By 1900, 85 percent of the nation's industrial work force consisted of foreign-born workers and their children. For example, a succession of Irish, English, French Canadian, Polish, Portuguese, Greek, Italian, and Russian newcomers came to staff New England's textile mills. But the contribution of immigrants was not just in their numbers; immigrants added expertise. Skilled immigrant workers transferred technical knowledge and ability from Europe to the United States—English and French silk weavers and

northern Italian silk dyers in Paterson, New Jersey; German cutlery makers in Philadelphia; or English brass workers in Waterbury, Connecticut.[39]

Certain industries became known for employing particular ethnic groups, although these patterns varied by region and by population. For example, certain ethnic groups came to dominate the cigar industry during the nineteenth century. In the 1890s, Jacob Riis chronicled the conditions of the German and Bohemian immigrants who comprised a significant percentage of the unskilled cigar-making workforce in New York City. During the prior decade, cigar manufacturing had become a major industry in California and had been notable for employing Chinese workers. Despite racist attitudes against the Chinese cigar workers—exemplified by the emergence of an organization called the White Cigar Makers' Association of the Pacific Coast comprised of members who refused to work for manufacturers that hired Chinese workers—Chinese immigrants made major inroads into the industry. It is estimated that by 1885 anywhere from three-quarters to seven-eighths of the workers in the California cigar industry were Chinese. Even though Chinese immigrants endured rampant racism, which culminated in the Exclusion Act of 1882, this hostility did not render them a placid workforce. In 1884, two years after the passage of the blockade on Chinese immigration, Chinese cigar workers in San Francisco launched a strike for an increase in pay rate. After the success of that effort, they launched a second one that same year to demand "union shop conditions." Resistance from the newly organized San Francisco Merchants and Manufacturers' Association, however, ultimately doomed that effort.[40]

Perhaps the best illustration of how immigrants shaped a local industry and a local community during this time period occurred in the cigar-manufacturing center, Ybor City (Ybor City Historic District, NHL, 1990) just outside of Tampa, Florida. The cigar trade began in Tampa in the mid-1880s. In 1885 Vicente Martínez Ybor purchased land outside of Tampa and started a city that focused exclusively on cigar production, relying on the Spanish method of hand-rolling cigars. The rollers were skilled workers who crafted cigars to the right length, density, tightness, and circumference using tobacco from Cuba.

During its first several decades, the city was a staunchly ethnic enclave. The predominance of "English spoken here" signs that hung in stores well into the 1930s indicated that *English* was the foreign language. The largest ethnic group in Ybor was Cuban. The initial Cubans had migrated to Ybor from Key West; following this group were immigrants who came directly from Cuba. After the 1890s, Spanish immigrants, especially from Asturias and Galicia, arrived in the city. By the turn of the century, Italian immigrants, mostly from Sicily, joined them. Other ethnic populations included a small group of Germans who dominated the field of cigar box art. Jewish

[39] The role of immigration in late nineteenth-century industrialization is treated in Herbert Gutman and Ira Berlin, "Class Composition and the Development of the American Working Class, 1840-1890," in Herbert Gutman, *Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987).

[40] Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 213-216. Local 228 of the Cigar Makers' International Union formed in San Francisco in 1884, but the union had nativist overtones. One of their primary efforts was to get white workers into shops that had previously employed Chinese makers, in an effort to push the Chinese out of the trade.

and Chinese immigrants represented the smallest populations, and they primarily labored in mercantile and service industries.[41]




(L) ***Ybor Cigar Factory, Tampa, FL, c. 1886-1890*** *(LOC P&P, HABS FL-270)*
(R) ***Ybor Cigar Factory, 1979; now part of Ybor City National Historic District, Tampa, FL*** *(Walter Smalling, LC P&P, HABS FL-270)*

The work of cigar making was organized into a strict social and economic hierarchy. Gary Mormino and George E. Pozzetta write, "Dominated by a craft mentality and possessing a full complement of artisan work styles and outlooks, the cigar trade created an industrial ethic based on individual craftsmanship much like the standards of the old-world artisan guilds." In Ybor, during the early years of the industry, Spanish immigrants were at the top of this ladder, and they dominated the category of salaried worker (foremen, managers, skilled white-collar staff—clerks, accountants, and salesmen). The manufacturers were Spanish and they selected the managers, foremen, tobacco selectors, and packers. The rollers of the most expensive cigars were also Spanish; Cubans rolled less expensive cigars. Afro-Cubans, recent Italian immigrants, and African Americans were employed in lowest-wage positions: sweeping, hauling, portering, and door keeping. Many of the tobacco strippers, another undesirable position, were Italian women who had recently immigrated. Although positions and opportunities for advancement in the industry were segregated along ethnic and racial lines, certain jobs displayed a degree of integration uncommon in the Jim Crow South, as Mormino and Pozzetta explain, "No other industry permitted Blacks, Latin Americans, European immigrants, and women to labor side-by-side at the same workbench."[42]

In almost every respect, Ybor was a single-industry town. As more industries developed outside of established urban centers, company-owned towns, or even municipalities that remained independent but were completely dominated by a single employer, became commonplace during the industrial boom of the late nineteenth century. For instance, Johnstown, Pennsylvania was an incorporated municipality, but the Cambria Iron Company's Steel Mills dominated almost all aspects of economic life. Like other industries of its kind, the Cambria Company built

[41] "Ybor City Historic District National Historic Landmark Nomination," National Historic Landmark Nomination Form (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service), 32.
[42] Gary Ross Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians And Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 100-101, 107.

neighborhoods of company-owned housing in order to attract and maintain a steady workforce. At the same time, they encouraged workers to purchase their own homes—an option that was not always available to many steel workers.

Prior to 1880, English-speaking workers constituted an overwhelming majority of the workforce at Cambria. After the iron works in Johnstown were established, Welsh miners from the northern region of Cambria County moved to the area. The first German workers arrived in the 1830s. In the 1870s, hundreds of German and Scandinavian immigrants came to work in the mills, sent by contract agencies in New York City. The railroad construction brought the first Irish to the community. By the turn of the century, more immigrants from eastern and southern Europe arrived. They took over the unskilled positions, and most sought to earn enough to support their families back in their home countries, places that they themselves sought to eventually return to.

The recent immigrants who came to work in the mills were much like those who constituted the workforce in various heavy industries in the Northeast and Midwest. Most of the newer immigrants came from rural, agricultural regions and had to adjust to extremely dangerous work environments in which they had no prior experience. Language barriers only increased the dangerous nature of the work. The lack of benefits like workmen's compensation or sick pay spurred immigrants to establish their own mutual aid societies. These organizations also provided valuable social and educational resources, for they created a space in which older immigrants would teach newer ones the skills needed for work in the mills, help them find housing, and assist them in navigating other aspects of their new lives.

Like other industrial towns, Johnstown had a split labor market in which native-born and English-speaking immigrants held the better jobs, had access to the best housing stock, earned higher wages, and had a greater chance for upward mobility; the Southern and Eastern European immigrants had the worst jobs and housing. In fact, many of Cambria's policies regarding hiring and promotion policies were steeped in nativism.[43] The mutual aid societies therefore helped immigrants to deal with the prejudices of their new home, even if their stay was only temporary.

A primary reason why industries created company towns was that they developed in areas that did not have access to nearby cities or even towns. While this was especially the case for extractive industries, it also occurred in industries that developed close to their source of production—a source that was far removed from most urban development. One clear example of this is the salmon canning industry that developed alongside remote waterways in Alaska. The Kake Cannery (NHL, 1998) was so self-sufficient that it provided all living needs for its labor force for the whole salmon season.

The story of Kake began in 1912, when the Sanborn Cutting Company constructed the first buildings for the new canning operation. The company largely relied on foreign contract workers, mostly Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino immigrants, as well as Korean, African American, and Mexican workers, although to a lesser extent. The cannery also employed native Tlingit and Haida as fishermen, which was uncommon among the Alaskan canneries. Initially, Chinese workers filled the need for labor as the company increased its operations. Canning

[43] Sharon Brown, *Cambria Iron Company: America's Industrial Heritage Project, Pennsylvania* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1989), 135, 153-55, 157.

employers regarded the Chinese as experienced fish butchers and considered them to be a docile workforce that could be easily controlled. Chinese immigrants also worked as unskilled workers, which made them critical to every step of the canning process. The Chinese Exclusion Acts of 1882 and 1904 directly affected the salmon canneries by cutting the number of skilled butchers. With the absence of low-paid Chinese butchers, the wages of cannery workers rose, which had a corresponding effect on the costs of production. Japanese immigrants were the first to replace the Chinese during the 1880s through the early 1900s. Filipinos represented the third wave of workers employed at Kake and other salmon canneries in the Pacific Northwest. More Filipino migrants entered the industry after the immigration restriction acts of 1921 and 1924 halted Japanese immigration.

As with other industries of this era, jobs were divided along lines of race rather than ability. Whites were employed in positions that had more responsibility (e.g. foremen and mechanics) based on racist notions that they were more "trustworthy," and thus were also the highest paid employees. Like the housing supplied by the Cambria Iron Works, the Kake Cannery illustrates how employers segregated workers by race and ethnicity, for the company established separate bunk houses for White, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino workers.[44] The cultural separation that this sort of ethnic division engendered in some ways helped to keep ethnic tensions at a minimum, but at the same time served to thwart collectivization. In fact, managers often used ethnic and racial divisions to prevent workers from unionizing—a situation that became glaring during the struggles for labor organization throughout the early twentieth century.



(L) ***Kake Cannery, Alaska, manager's houses on left, 2000*** *(Jet Lowe, LOC P&P, HAER AK-26)*
(R) ***Kake Cannery, bunk house for white workers, 2000*** *(Jet Lowe, LOC P&P, HAER AK-26)*

[44] Linda Cook and Karen Bretz, "Kake Cannery National Historic Landmark Nomination," National Historic Landmark Nomination Form (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1997), 12, 16-18.



Steel mill worker who is asking for more pay, at his work of puddling iron, 1919 *(LOC P&P, National Photo Company)*

Restructuring the American Shop Floor

The emergence of large-scale enterprises in the late nineteenth century entailed a complicated history. Whatever the causes, the rise of big business had an enormous impact on the American people. The corporation represented a great threat to concepts of national identity that viewed Americans as hearty and independent producers and citizens—a greater threat than the earlier spread of market activity and the wage labor system. The last decades of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth century brought notable protest against the economic and political power of the corporation and subsequently a modicum of governmental regulation of business. As noted, antitrust legislation had the effect of furthering mergers, and soon corporate executives recognized that they could shape regulatory legislation to their own needs to curb competition and achieve market stability.

The corporation figured in the great labor battles of the period. The last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed unprecedented strike activity, with federal authorities recording more than 1,000 strikes engaging 200,000 workers annually on average.[45] As social historians have recently emphasized, work stoppages in the era involved whole communities. Community members from all walks of life rallied and rioted with striking workers to protest the hard times that occurred with the frequent economic downturns of the age, the exploitative employment practices of

[45] The most comprehensive analysis of strike statistics for the late-nineteenth century is afforded in P. K. Edwards, *Strikes in the United States, 1881-1974* (New York: St. Martin's, 1981).

particular firms, and the general threat that the corporation represented to cherished republican ideals.[46]

The rise of large-scale industrial enterprises presented specific challenges to carrying out work. In an earlier age, workers were motivated by personal relations with owners of small manufactories and the dream of working hard and becoming an independent producer. The imperatives of the new corporate-owned, bureaucrat-managed firms were at odds with the sensibilities of working people. Tensions flared, and labor conflict in the late nineteenth century set off intense searches for new means of engineering diligence and loyalty at the workplace.

The attempt to secure labor peace in large-scale industry involved numerous and varied initiatives. Wresting control of production from the hands of skilled mechanics loomed as one vital goal, as did the development of new organizational incentives for all workers. Firms experimented with a mix of strategies, but often only with partial success. In spite of all the efforts at managerial regulation, conflict persisted. The following depicts the major kinds of initiatives.

Embedding Control of Production in Machinery

Industrialization may have spelled an end—a slow end—to the artisan shop, but it did not diminish the need for skilled labor. In many large-scale industries, skilled workers supervised teams of men they directly hired.[47] The iron and steel industry provides a classic case. In the 1870s and 1880s in the typical Pittsburgh iron and steel mill, skilled puddlers oversaw the difficult mixing and heating of the ores and fuels; rollers formed molten iron into ingots, sheets and rails; molders prepared casts; and forgers hammered large components into shape. Mill owners reached per-ton and per-piece agreements with the skilled men—rates sliding with the prices the owners could fetch in the marketplace—and as these industrial craftsmen organized into unions, arrangements became negotiated on a collective basis.

As competition increased in the last decades of the nineteenth century, pressure emerged to end the rule of the skilled men and to replace them with automated technologies. With the adoption of Bessemer converters, open-hearth furnaces, and new instrumentation, plant managers eliminated the need for the all-important puddlers. Continuous rolling machines displaced the labor of the highly skilled rollers; and new mechanical mixers, ladles, hammers, cranes, and trolleys further reduced skill demands. The greater mechanization of iron and steel making did not occur without difficulty or opposition. Technical innovation first required defeat of the well-organized craft unions in the trade. The Homestead Strike of 1892, a monumental labor battle of the era, represented a culminating victory of management over the skilled men and critically diminished their reign in iron and steel production. The new technologies entailed enormous

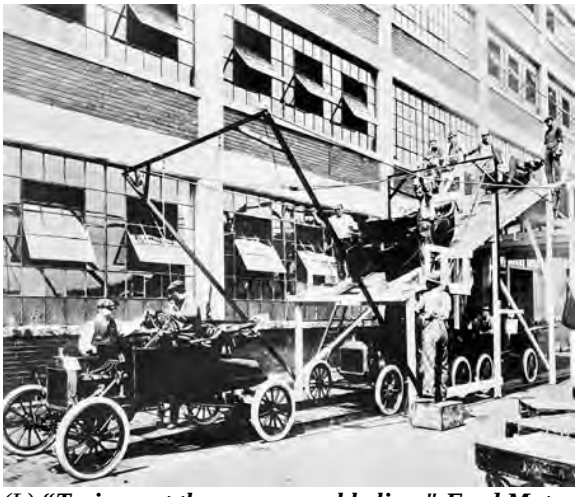
[46] The historian Herbert Gutman spent his scholarly lifetime providing evidence and understanding of the community nature of labor strife. His key essays are anthologized in Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York: Knopf, 1976) and *Power and Culture*.

[47] The persisting controls on production exerted by skilled industrial workers is discussed in David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979) and Daniel Nelson, *Managers and Workers: Origins of the New Factory System in the United States, 1880-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975).

financial investments and their adoption often necessitated the pooling of resources. In this way, labor conflict contributed to the merger movement.[48]

The products of iron and steel making varied too greatly for there to be a continuous production process. Managers in the industry were unable to completely embed control of manufacture in machinery. That absolute dream awaited executives in the new automobile industry, and the key figure here is Henry Ford.[49] In the first years of the twentieth century, Ford was among a number of small-scale producers of cars. In his workshop, skilled men working in teams assembled cars from components manufactured by a host of parts suppliers. Ford determined that a market existed for cheap standardized cars, and he moved toward mass production. He first recognized that a more efficient assembling of cars—and one not relying on skilled fitters—required precision made parts. He assumed control over the manufacture of components, innovating with new precision machinery and measuring devices. In addition, he began assembly-line production of larger components with the well-honed smaller elements that he could now produce.

With innovations in parts production, Ford then decided to extend the assembly-line principle to the actual building of cars. In 1910, he opened his revolutionary Highland Park Plant (Highland Park Ford Plant, NHL, 1978) on the outskirts of Detroit, Michigan. The plant included areas for assembly-line parts production and what would be the famed moving assembly line along which tens of thousands of mass production workers toiled, tediously attaching separate pieces to Ford's Model T car.





(L) ***"Trying out the new assembly line," Ford Motor Company, Detroit, MI, 1912*** *(NARA Records of the Bureau of Public Roads [30-N-49-1482]); (R)* ***"Workers on the first moving assembly line put together magnetos and flywheels for 1913 Ford autos," Highland Park, MI, 1913*** *(NARA, Records of the U.S. Information Agency [306-PSE-73-1534])*

[48] The place of labor unrest in the rise of big business is highlighted in James Livingston, "The Social Analysis of Economic History and Theory: Conjectures on Late 19th-Century American Development," *American Historical Review* 92 (February 1987): 69-95.

[49] A large scholarly literature exists on Henry Ford and his innovations with moving assembly lines in automobile manufacture. Some works include: Stephen Meyer, *The Five Dollar Day: Labor Management and Social Control in the Ford Motor Company, 1908-1921* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981); David Hounshell, *From the American System to Mass Production*; and Nelson Lichtenstein and Stephen Meyer, eds., *On the Line: Essays in the History of Auto Work* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

Ford's system, however, did not work as flawlessly as intended (all the publicity it received notwithstanding). By the late 1920s, Ford's standardized production methods proved an impediment. General Motors, a new conglomerate of automotive firms, surpassed Ford with a revolutionary sales strategy that emphasized varied and changing car styles. GM's ploy required a more flexible production system than at Ford, using more all-purpose than specialized machinery and relying more on skilled labor. Ford adjusted to the challenge only slowly.

The Ford assembly line provided unbearable work. The company experienced extreme labor turnover—in the 400 percent range in the 1910s. To achieve greater stability, Ford launched a number of benevolent programs. The most famous was the Five Dollar a Day plan, announced in 1914, which offered the (at the time) very high wage of $5 a day to loyal employees. To be eligible, workers and their families first had to be screened to determine whether they were worthy members of the community. In later years, Ford tried other schemes, including the recruitment of African American workers through local Black churches, but all of the company's benevolence was matched by vehement anti-unionism.

Embedding control of production in technology offered no guarantees. It was not always technically feasible or good for sales. Machinery setting the pace of production also did not always bring labor under management's thumb. Ford workers literally walked off their jobs in great numbers. As executives in the car industry would learn in the 1930s, it did not take much for workers to flip the electrical switches off and halt the machinery and assembly lines.

Embedding Control of Production in Detailed Divisions of Labor

Division of labor had been a hallmark of industrialization from the outset. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, division of labor in manufacture became a religion. The chief proselytizer was Frederick Winslow Taylor.[50] Taylor was born in Philadelphia in 1856 in comfortable surroundings. Instead of pursuing a college education as his parents had expected, he became a machinist's apprentice and later a foreman at the Midvale Steel Company in his native city. At Midvale, Taylor began a series of experiments aimed at increasing the efficiency of the flow of goods through the productive process and the productivity of the workers employed there—worker's control over the pace of production at Midvale particularly aggrieved him. Although he introduced a range of managerial reforms, Taylor is most famous for his time-and-motion studies; his effort at breaking work into detailed, easily supervised tasks and cataloguing them; establishing time rates for finishing jobs; and structuring pay incentive schemes to boost output.

Taylor moved from Midvale to serve as a consultant to many manufacturing firms—particularly in the metal trades—and with his disciples and competitors formed the "scientific management" movement. Taylor attended to the use of machinery, but for him the great potential for control of production lay not in hard technology but in systems of compensation. Taylor and others have been seen as critical agents in the restructuring of the American industrial shop floor and work in general, yet the historical record reveals that proponents of scientific management rarely

[50] Frederick Winslow Taylor's life and career and the limited impact of scientific management is stressed in Daniel Nelson, *Frederick W. Taylor and the Rise of Scientific Management* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980) and Daniel Nelson, ed., *A Mental Revolution: Scientific Management since Taylor* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992).

succeeded in putting their innovations in place. Resistance from foremen who were threatened by the new consultants, more notable resistance from workers, and the administrative nightmare involved in cataloguing tasks and establishing rates—especially in firms where product lines were always changing—doomed Tayloristic experiments from the start. Taylorism was also often adopted with other strategies of labor control, such as benevolent schemes, which Taylor would have frowned upon. His mechanistic sense of human psychology would be rejected by a later generation of personnel consultants. Taylorism was just a part of a much larger and multifaceted story.

The Defeat of Industrial Craft Unions

Direct assaults on the shop floor rule of skilled workers represented a third managerial strategy. That meant refusing to further deal with industrial craft unions and abrogating existing agreements on work rules and pay scales. For plant owners seeking to achieve controls on production through automated technologies or detailed divisions of labor, defeating the associations of skilled workers became a top priority.

In the late 1880s, executives in the iron and steel industry made significant headway in expunging the powerful Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers from plants. The Amalgamated remained strong in one key facility, the Homestead Works just outside of Pittsburgh, owned by steel magnate Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie and his partner and general manager, Henry Frick, determined to deal the union a fatal blow, a decision with legendary consequences.[51]

In late June 1892, Frick announced an end to dealings with the union. He ordered the building of fortifications around the Homestead plant, instructing guards not to allow Amalgamated men into the facility. To protect newly-hired nonunion men, Frick needed greater protection, and this set the stage for a pitched battle. On July 6, 300 private police from the Pinkerton Detective Agency arrived by water near the Homestead plant on covered barges. Workers locked-out of employment attacked the invaders, pelting them with stones and bricks. For hours, defiant steelworkers and the Pinkertons exchanged shots. An armistice was eventually arranged, and the private police force allowed to land, but not before nine steelworkers and seven Pinkertons lay dead. The Pennsylvania state militia soon arrived to restore order, but also to allow Frick to hire more nonunion men. By the fall of 1892, Carnegie and Frick resumed full production, and the strike was lost. The expulsion of the union from Homestead allowed the steel managers to gain further controls over production with new technologies and the hiring now of a seemingly more compliant labor force of semi- and unskilled workers of immigrant background. Bitterness, however, would prevail in the community of Homestead for decades.

[51] The most comprehensive history of the famed Homestead Strike of 1892 is provided in Paul Krause, *The Battle for Homestead, 1880-1892: Politics, Culture, and Steel* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1992).



State militia entering Homestead, Pennsylvania after institution of martial law, July 1892 *(Underwood & Underwood, LOC P&P)*

The attempt to defeat the unions of skilled industrial workers figured indirectly in another legendary labor upheaval of the period. In the early 1880s, Cyrus McCormick Jr. assumed leadership of the McCormick Reaper Works, and he was determined to end the craft system of producing farm equipment maintained by his father. He sought to replace the skilled and well-organized molders, blacksmiths, machinists, and woodworkers who fashioned the machines. In the mid-1880s, he introduced new technologies to the McCormick plant in Chicago, which displaced a core of skilled men, and in February of 1886 he declared the works an open shop and fired all the remaining union workers. Demonstrations ensued, the conflict turning violent as fighting broke out between former employees and Pinkerton guards brought in to protect newly hired replacements.

On May 3, protesting workers at McCormick received assistance from other groups of workers in Chicago who were mobilizing on behalf of the eight-hour workday. Chicago police, fixed on breaking this latest protest, waded into the crowd, shooting and killing four demonstrators. A protest meeting was called for that night at Haymarket Square (Haymarket Martyrs' Monument, NHL, 1997). Between 2,000 and 3,000 people attended what at first was a peaceful gathering, but, as they later dispersed, a bomb exploded in the midst of a contingent of policemen. Eight officers were killed, and, as other police responded with gunfire, blood flowed in the streets of Chicago—with eight workers killed and upwards of 50 wounded.

The Haymarket bombing reverberated throughout the nation. A sensational trial followed in which eight members of what were deemed radical organizations were prosecuted and found guilty of conspiracy in placing the bomb (six of the eight actually could not even be placed at the scene). Their conviction and the subsequent hanging of four of them produced great protest. The

Haymarket tragedy severely hurt the trade union movement, for the public began to identify labor organization with radicalism and incendiarism.[52]

With managers ultimately prevailing in dramatic and symbolic confrontations at McCormick and Homestead, the campaign against the unions and skilled industrial workers spread. After failing to reach accommodations with well-organized molders and machinists, executives in the metal and machine trades in the first decades of the twentieth century successfully moved to rid their industry of union presence. The once strong associations of molders and machinists would not be heard from for another generation. A key element then in the transformation of the American shop floor after 1880 included direct attacks on industrial craft unions.[53]

Increased Supervision

New technologies and diminishing dependency on skilled workers did not guarantee increased productivity in large-scale manufactories. Unskilled and semiskilled mass production workers, who now composed a greater part of the industrial work force, needed overseeing, and the first decades of the twentieth century witnessed a doubling in the ratio of supervisors to employees in American industry. Supervision became more specialized.

Owners of industrial facilities in the mid- and late nineteenth century left the management of their enterprises to others—at times to teams of skilled workers, but more often to shop floor superintendents. In some instances, these bosses ruled as so-called inside contractors—they signed agreements with the owners to produce specified lots of goods and hired their own labor; in other cases, they served as salaried bureaucrats of the firms.[54] Whatever the particular nature of their employment, factory foremen received, assumed, and exerted great power at the workplace.

The capricious governance of the foremen—their nepotism, petty extortions, and arbitrary decision-making—generated grievances among workers and was a significant cause of strikes in the late nineteenth century. In the name of fairness and security, workers sought to install union work rules during the era to counter the discriminatory actions of their supervisors. The foremen presented problems to higher-level executives, who sought to rationalize operations. The supervisors fomented labor conflict and often blocked reform. An answer for these troubles for top management lay in curbing the generalized rule of the foremen and their training and specialization. Changes in shop floor practice at the turn of the century entailed changes in supervision. The number of foremen grew, and their tasks became more detailed (Taylorized, in effect).[55]

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[52] The events surrounding the Haymarket Square bombing of May 1886 are described in Paul Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[53] The attack on skilled workers and their unions is best described and analyzed in David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[54] The practice of inside subcontracting in factories is treated in John Buttrick, "The Inside Contract System," *Journal of Economic History* 12 (Summer 1952): 205-221.

[55] The changing place of foremen in the factory is discussed in Daniel Nelson, *Managers and Workers: Origins of the New Factory System in the United States, 1880-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975).

Molding the Labor Force

Another strategy for achieving labor control in large-scale enterprises involved shaping the character of the work force. This could first entail deliberate screening in the hiring process. Employers in the metal trades, for example, in the first decades of the twentieth century, jointly formed recruitment bureaus to weed out known and potential union activists.[56] More subtle kinds of employment practice emerged during and after World War I. Partially to deal with labor shortages caused by high turnover and military conscription, manufacturing companies established new personnel departments to systematize hiring (and take the hiring function out of the hands of foremen). Personnel officers began experimenting with reference and testing procedures to measure aptitudes and personal traits of applicants. The goal was to assemble a capable and compliant work force and match workers to specific jobs based on assumed abilities and temperaments.[57]

A final effort in forging a work force better accommodated to the new corporate order involved systematizing the internal flow of labor within firms. To boost the loyalty of workers, managers of large-scale enterprises created intricate career ladders. If independent producership no longer was the reward for tireless service to one's employer, then upward mobility within the organization was now held out to the assiduous. Workers, however, could not hope to rise to any and all positions. Separate tracks were created for manual, clerical, technical, and upper managerial ranks. Internal mobility and segmentation of labor within companies became dual features of large-scale industry in the first decades of the twentieth century. Still, the effort to build organizational incentives to encourage hard work illustrates that corporate managers at the dawn of the corporation tried both "carrot" and "stick" approaches to labor control.

Positive Incentives

Replacing workers with technology, routinization of tasks, breaking the unions of skilled workers, greater superintendency, and controlling recruitment represented only one side of the story of the transforming of the American shop floor. The period 1880 to 1930 also witnessed endless attempts to effect labor peace through the building of good will between managers and workers. In many respects, this represents a continuity of practice. Samuel Slater and Francis Cabot Lowell early in the nineteenth century, for example, had attempted to create wholesome environments for textile workers, and they offer the first examples of industrial capitalist benevolence (and of its shortsightedness and failure). Building model company towns remained an ideal late into the century, and one famous case provided the initial site of another monumental labor battle of the age of corporate ascendance.

George Pullman achieved prominence in the 1870s for the manufacture of his sumptuous railway sleeping and dining cars. In the 1880s, he attracted attention for creating a seemingly model community in south Chicago for the families of the men who labored in his shops fabricating

[56] Walter Licht, *Getting Work: Philadelphia, 1840-1950* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 178-181.

[57] For the role of new personnel officers, see Nelson, Managers and Workers, and Sanford Jacoby, Employing Bureaucracy: Managers, Unions, and the Transformation of Work in American Industry, 1900-1945 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

Pullman cars. Harmony in his well-landscaped and complete company town, though, was just an appearance (Pullman, NHD, 1970).[58]



"Manufacturing City of Pullman and Car Works Belonging to Pullman Palace Car Company," Graphic News, September 10, 1887 *(LOC P&P, HABS IL-1091)*

In June 1894, Pullman announced a reduction in wages due to a severe economic downturn that had begun a year earlier. Employees of the company walked off their jobs in protest. Pullman had refused to lower rents in the already high-cost lodging that he provided for his workers, so the wage cuts represented a serious hardship. Pullman reacted to the strike by closing down the plant, content to draw revenue from the leasing of existing Pullman cars.

Soon faced with eviction and under increasing economic duress, Pullman workers appealed for assistance to the American Railway Union (ARU) and its young charismatic leader, Eugene Victor Debs. Debs warily agreed to help, and, in support of the Pullman strikers, he called on ARU men to refuse to operate trains with Pullman cars. Thus, began the Pullman boycott of early July 1894, a job action that would bring the nation's rail traffic and commerce to a halt. The Pullman strike and boycott was marked by dramatic events that garnered worldwide attention: fighting between workers and police, the use of federal troops and injunctions to stem the insurrection, the jailing of key leaders, and ultimately the defeat of the Pullman workers. The loss of the strike had a sobering effect on the labor movement and gave weight to leaders such as Samuel Gompers, head of the American Federation of Labor, who advocated greater caution. The Pullman upheaval convinced business leaders of the folly and costliness of trying to

[58] The community established by George Pullman is described in Stanley Buder, *Pullman: An Experiment in Industrial Order and Community Planning, 1880-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). The standard history of the Pullman strike and boycott remains Almont Lindsey, *The Pullman Strike: The Story of a Unique Experiment and of a Great Labor Upheaval* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942).

engender labor loyalty and diligence by building model company towns. The events of July 1894, however, did not stop manufacturers from seeking peace on the shop floor through other benevolent means.

A new paternalist approach emerged at the turn of the twentieth century that involved specific programs. Corporate leaders developed packages of such positive initiatives. For example, by 1920, the John B. Stetson Hat Company in Philadelphia could boast of a company store where employees could buy foodstuffs at wholesale prices and partake of language and civics courses, group life insurance plans, a housing loan association, a savings bank, a Stetson chorus (which performed on local radio), Stetson baseball and track teams, numerous extracurricular clubs, a weekend lodge, a profit sharing plan, a Sunday school, a hospital, various bonus systems, and turkey giveaways on holidays.[59]

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, scores of firms instituted similar benefits, systematically managed by new personnel directors. During the 1920s, manufacturers extended positive initiatives to include health insurance and pension plans. New theories of human psychology led to emphasis on group dynamics as a means of building worker loyalty. The Western Electric Hawthorne Plant in Chicago was a key site for such experiments. To counter unions and appear democratically minded, so-called employee representation committees were formed where workers could air grievances. Corporate welfare efforts became well discussed and celebrated in the 1920s.[60]

Another famous example of positive incentives also occurred at Ford's Highland Park Plant, for it was here that he unveiled the famous "Five Dollar a Day" plan. This turned the Highland Park Plant into a destination for many workers, especially African Americans and Mexicans. Of all the auto industrialists, Ford employed the highest percentage of Mexican workers—immigrants and migrants. During the 1920s, Ford worked with the Mexican government to select two hundred young men for training at the Henry Ford Service School located at Highland Park. The men apprenticed as mechanics on cars, trucks, and tractors as part of their training to become technicians at dealerships in Mexico and throughout Latin America. Immigrants who did not seek to return to Mexico also saw the plant as a major opportunity. Despite enduring the kinds of hostility that foremen and native-born or older immigrant co-workers often directed towards recent immigrants, many Mexicans saw work in the auto industry, particularly at Ford plants, as a way to climb the economic ladder. Historian Zaragosa Vargas writes, "To wear the silver Ford

[59] A comprehensive study of corporate welfare plans of the first decades of the twentieth century is provided in Stuart Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism, 1880-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976). For the John B. Stetson Hat Company see, Licht, *Getting Work*, 160-161. The Great Depression of the 1930s, however, forced the jettisoning of benevolent programs as managers rushed to cut operating costs. The desire of American workers to see benefit plans reconstituted, though this time under union control and contract, would be an element in the massive labor organizing drives of the 1930s.

[60] The expansion of corporate welfare schemes in the 1920s and the role they played in the great labor organizing drives of the 1930s is discussed in David Brody, "The Rise and Decline of Welfare Capitalism," in *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the 20th Century Struggle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) and Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

badge and short ('white-walled') haircut, which were the distinctive trademarks of the Ford autoworker, became the ambition of Mexicans in the climb for status."[61]



Immigrants in English class given by Ford Motor Co. Factory, Detroit, MI, between 1909-1932 *(LOC P&P, National Photo Company Collection)*

Americanization

Ford instituted the Five Dollar Plan not as a benevolent gesture, but rather because he saw it as making good business sense. Ford vehemently opposed unionization, and the plan was designed to retain workers' loyalty to the company. It also had clear social implications, for to be considered eligible for the increased pay and shorter workday (from nine to eight hours), workers had to demonstrate that they were living as virtuous Americans—implications that were particularly clear for Ford's many immigrant workers. Following Progressive era sociological notions that environmental factors were key in shaping workers' behaviors and attitudes, Ford instituted a Sociology Department to study as well as "remake the lives of their immigrant workers and win them over to thrift, efficiency, and company loyalty," according to historian James R. Barnett. This was not restricted to the workplace—case workers invaded workers' neighborhoods and evaluated their living conditions, for the five dollar a day deal was contingent on workers' adherence to middle-class norms at work as well as at home. "Thus," Barrett explains, "the company sought to show workers not only the 'right way to work' but also the right way to live." These expectations extended to cultural practices as well. When nine hundred workers missed work to celebrate the Orthodox Christmas on the Julian calendar, Ford fired them all, citing that if they wanted to live in America, they could only celebrate "American" holidays. Ford's program served as a model for other industries in meatpacking, steel, farm

[61] Zaragosa Vargas, Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 51-52.

machinery, and textiles, among others. By the spring of 1919, at least 800 industrial plants held classes or offered classes in conjunction with the YMCA to teach White, middle-class values to their ethnic working-class labor force.[62]

Ford's emphasis on Americanization through work was a common feature of the manufacturing world after the turn of the century. The growing immigrant segment of the labor force posed particular problems for managers of large industrial works. In the first decades of the twentieth century, firm officials assumed the task of "Americanizing" foreign-born recruits, shaping the newcomers ostensibly into hard toiling, non-radical American workers. To that end, manufacturing firms such as US Steel and McCormick implemented so-called Americanization programs, which included factory classes in the English language and civics. As with testing plans, these new initiatives had a greater impact in encasing personnel officers into the bureaucracies than in remolding the beliefs and habits of immigrant workers.[63]

The American industrial workplace was transformed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the process was hardly uniform, comprehensive, or complete. Old practices persisted, particularly in small, specialized manufactories. Managers experimented with various approaches to labor control, positive and negative, often shifting from one to another, and no single strategy can be taken as a mark of the period. As the 1930s would also reveal, peace on the shop remained elusive. In spite of deliberate efforts by corporate managers to achieve control over production through technical and organizational means, they would soon learn that workers still had the power to close down assembly lines.

[62] James R. Barrett, "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930," *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (December 1992): 1003.

[63] A classic study of Americanization Plans is Gerd Korman, *Industrialization, Immigrants, and Americanizers: The View from Milwaukee, 1866-1921* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1967).



Election of officers to the Ford Local 600, United Automobile Workers, Congress of Industrial Organizations; 80,000 River Rouge Ford plant workers voted, Detroit, MI, 1942 *(Arthur Siegal, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

Mass Production Unionism

Labor unrest accompanied the rise of large-scale enterprise, with conflict between higher-wage skilled workers and managers a major aspect. Low wage factory hands did not recede into the background, however. Like their counterparts in an earlier age of industrial development, they engaged in protest focused not on control of production but rather on the grievous conditions under which they worked.

In the 1880s, textile workers in both the North and the South struck for better pay and shorter hours under the banner of the Knights of Labor. The Knights was one of the first national unions to include both skilled and low wage workers; they also included Black and White workers (although not all locals put this color-blind policy into practice). When the Knights collapsed in the wake of the Haymarket Affair, low wage workers lost the support of a national union. Although the American Federation of Labor had operated since the later decades of the nineteenth century, their craft-based approach focused on organizing skilled workers. Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, however, a new union called the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), emerged with the express intention of organizing workers of all skill and income levels.

The IWW was initially strong among miners in the West, but soon spread around the country. Their emphasis on organizing workers on an industry-wide basis did provide an outlet for low wage workers, but their radical brand of syndicalism (in which workers own the means of production) engendered harsh, and often violent, reprisals from operators. It also limited their following to those open to radical alternatives. In the first two decades of the twentieth century,

organizers of the IWW led strikes of immigrant textile workers, including the dramatic strikes of woolen workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1912 and silk textile workers in Paterson, New Jersey.

The Paterson strike began on January 1, 1913, at the Henry Doherty plant, the largest plant in the largest silk manufacturing center in the country. That morning over eight hundred silk loom weavers walked off the job. This strike, like so many in the textile industry, was prompted by the introduction of the speed-up and stretch-out system, as well as low wages, long hours, and poor working conditions.[64] The walkout soon turned from an isolated incident at a single plant into a general strike affecting all of the mills and dye houses—over three hundred—in Paterson and encompassing 25,000 workers. Shortly after the strike was launched, a local IWW representative requested organizers come and assist the strikers. By mid-February key figures including Big Bill Haywood, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Carlo Tresca, and Patrick Quinlan answered the call. The IWW formed a central strike committee that crossed craft and ethnic lines; they also established a relief fund, arranged social activities, provided information to silk workers outside of Paterson, and acquired legal help for arrested strikers. Many of the strikers were recent immigrants from Italy and Eastern Europe, and they comprised most of the low wage workforce.




I. W. W.
THE PAGEANT OF THE
PATERSON STRIKE
PERFORMED BY THE STRIKERS THEMSELVES.
MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
SATURDAY JUNE 7, 8:30 P.M.
BOXES $20 & $10: SEATS $2, 1.50, 1. 50¢, 25¢, & 10¢.

(L) ***Elizabeth Gurley Flynn speaking at I.W.W. Silk Workers Strike Headquarters in Paterson, NJ, 1913*** *(Brown Brothers; NYPL Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy)*
(R) ***I.W.W. poster advertising pageant to benefit striking Paterson silk workers, 1913*** *(WPRL)*

Throughout the strike, the IWW employed tactics for which they became known, including flooding the jails beyond capacity with striking workers. They worked to sustain strikers' morale by staging a massive pageant in New York City that involved notable figures of the time, including writer Jack Reed. They also provided weekly meetings to provide information, encouragement, and entertainment for the workers. Every Sunday during the strike, from March

[64] The speed-up and stretch-out system was a system somewhat unique to the textile industry. Efficiency experts hired by industrial heads of textile mills work track workers' movements. Eventually, they determined that one worker could do the work of at least two (stretch out) and, if motivated, could even do the work faster (speed up).

through July, the IWW held these meetings at the home of Pietro Botto, an Italian immigrant weaver who lived just across the border from Paterson. At these meetings, to crowds ranging from 5,000 to 6,000, IWW leaders gave speeches and ethnic choral groups sang songs from the strikers' homelands as well as songs from the strike itself (Pietro and Maria Botto House, NHL, 1982).

Although the strike ultimately failed, it was significant for many reasons. It brought public awareness to the plight of the unskilled worker in the textile industry, particularly their poor economic circumstances, for unskilled workers' wages were abysmally low—many could barely support a family on what they earned. In fact, this strike, as well as the strike the year prior in Lawrence, Massachusetts—also led largely by immigrant workers—provided a major impetus for industrial reforms including minimum wage and child labor laws, as well as the introduction of the forty-hour workweek.[65]

While both strikes involved IWW leadership, they were primarily led by immigrant workers, many of whom were women. Another key strike of the era, an event dubbed "The Uprising of 20,000," happened just a few years prior. In the fall of 1909, young immigrant women in the garment industry of New York City took it upon themselves to act in defiance of both their bosses and labor leaders by engaging in a massive work stoppage. As a highly exploited labor force, women in the garment industry earned between $3 and $10 a week—starvation wages—and they had to buy their own needles and other materials. Employers often docked their pay for minor infractions, locked the doors during the work hours so they couldn't take breaks, and required workers to ask for permission to use the bathroom. Eventually, workers were pushed to a breaking point and debated going on strike. Progressive reformers and labor leaders including Samuel Gompers advised them to use caution, but the women voted to go on strike anyway, following the encouragement of Clara Lemlich, a Jewish, Ukranian immigrant. An active union member of Local 25 of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, she gave a speech at a mass meeting at Cooper Union (NHL, 1961) in Yiddish recounting her own experiences and urging the women to take direct action. In the often-quoted speech, she declared "I am a working girl, one of those who are on strike against intolerable conditions. I am tired of listening to speakers who talk in general terms. What we are here for is to decide whether we shall strike or shall not strike. I offer a resolution that a general strike be declared now." The crowd erupted in cheers and 15,000 women walked off the job the next day.[66]

Moved by the plight of the immigrant working women, wealthy and middle-class White women showed up in solidarity on the picket lines and bailed strikers out of jail. The strike lasted eleven weeks and workers gained modest pay increases, a reduction in the workweek to 52 hours, and they no longer had to buy their own supplies. However, factory owners refused to concede to the key demand of improving safety conditions in the factories, the consequences of which would prove fatal a few years later at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory.

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[65] James Sheire, "Pietro Botto House," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 1982): 1-2, 10, 13.

[66] Heather Pool, "The Politics of Mourning: The Triangle Fire and Political Belonging," *Polity* 44, no. 2 (2012): 183, 191-96. "The Triangle Fire 100 Years After," *Labor Arts*, http://www.laborarts.org/exhibits/thetrianglefire/, accessed August 19, 2021.



Demonstration of protest and mourning for Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, April 5, 1911, New York City *(unknown photographer; NARA, General Records of the Department of Labor [174-G-22-50A])*

Strikes by low wage workers were not limited to northeastern textile cities. In Chicago, immigrant garment and packinghouse workers participated in notable strikes during the same period. The insurrectionary year of 1919 saw textile and garment workers on strike again, and during the summer of that year more than 350,000 steel workers walked off their jobs in hopes of gaining union recognition and improved working conditions.

The 1920s witnessed managerial and judicial onslaughts on trade unionism, but still textile hands in company towns in the southern Piedmont risked their jobs by striking in the latter years of that decade. On March 12, 1929, workers walked out of factories in Elizabethton, Tennessee. Soon they were joined by thousands of millhands in Marion and Gastonia, North Carolina, and other Piedmont towns. In South Carolina, eighty-one separate strikes involving over 79,000 workers occurred. The strike was a protest against mill owners' efforts to tighten expenses, increase efficiency, and limit wages. Workers at this mill were subject to the same kind of speed-up and stretch-out system that caused the silk workers in Paterson, New Jersey, to launch their strike.

After the high demand during the war years ended, the textile industry experienced a steep decline. Owners of the massive Loray Mill in Gastonia hired the Barnes Textile Service to determine how to cut costs. The efficiency experts at the firm returned with a plan to cut the labor from 3,500 to 2,300 by the end of 1928, while maintaining the same rate of output. In the spring of 1929, the Communist-affiliated National Textile Workers Union organized a strike to begin on April 1. When local officials used force against striking workers in several

communities, the strike drew heavy press coverage. In Elizabethton, 800 troops broke the workers' resistance and forced the reopening of the mills. In Marion, special deputies killed six workers and wounded twenty-five others. The most celebrated events occurred at the Loray Mill, where Ella May Wiggins, the balladeer and heroine of the strike, was ambushed and murdered en route to a union rally. Although the 1929 strike ultimately met with failure, it had a critical bearing on the future of textile unionism in the South by teaching workers the value of creative tactics, local leadership, and the power of collective action. These lessons set the stage for the dramatic events that would unfold in the textile industry during the summer and fall of 1934.[67] Between 1880 and 1930, factory operatives refused to remain silent, but few of their efforts brought either permanent labor organizations or union contracts.[68] Mass production unionism would first become an enduring feature of American manufacture in the 1930s and 1940s.

The critical story here is of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).[69] In the mid-1930s, John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers of America (United Mine Workers of America Building, NHL, 2005), led a rebellion in the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Dissidents demanded that the mainstream association begin organizing the millions of factory hands in the nation's mass production industries who remained outside the craft union fold of the AFL. When the rebels were ousted from the federation in 1935, Lewis and his allies launched a number of union campaigns under the banner of their new CIO. They first picked the steel industry and no less than the giant in the field, US Steel. Without a fight, executives of the company agreed in early 1937 to recognize the CIO's steel union and signed a contract that advanced favorable wages and benefits to US Steel employees.

Following this, the CIO targeted General Motors. Here a dramatic confrontation unfolded, featuring the famed sit-down strikes of winter 1937, the most critical occurring in a Flint, Michigan, Chevrolet car assembly plant. Workers tripped the switches, shutting off the conveyor belts, and occupied the building. Facing a united front, GM officials agreed in March to recognize the CIO's United Automobile Workers union (UAW).

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[67] On the strike at the Loray Mill, see John A. Salmond, *Gastonia 1929* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

[68] For the protests of semiskilled industrial workers before the 1930s, see: Susan Levine, *Labor's True Woman: Carpet Weavers, Industrialization, and Labor Reform in the Gilded Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Melton McLaurin, *The Knights of Labor in the South* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978); Ardis Cameron, *Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1860-1912* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1993); Steve Golin, *The Fragile Bridge: Paterson Silk Strike, 1913* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); James Barrett, *Work and Community in the Jungle: Chicago's Packinghouse Workers, 1894-1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); David Brody, *Labor in Crisis: The Steel Strike of 1919* (Philadelphia: Lippencott, 1965); and Jacquelyn D. Hall et al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,1987).

[69] The literature on the CIO is voluminous. For textbook treatments, see James Green, *The World of the Worker: Labor in 20th Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980) and Robert Zieger, *American Workers, American Unions, 1920-1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Lisa Pfueller Davidson, "Loray Mill Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, 2001): 41-43.



Sitdown strikers at Fisher body plant, Flint, MI, 1937 *(Sheldon Dick, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

Encouraged by these early victories, CIO organizers targeted other steel and automobile manufacturers and other industries—rubber, electronics, meatpacking, and aviation. They faced stiff opposition. Smaller companies in the steel industry held the line against the CIO. The battle for union recognition in these steel mills began at the Jones and Laughlin Plant in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania. Labor organizers of the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee (SWOC) then tried to negotiate agreements with the Republic Steel Corporation, Youngtown Sheet and Tube Corporation, Inland Steel, and the Bethlehem Steel Corporation. Together, these mills were known as "Little Steel," and they refused to sign the CIO contract. Soon, a strike broke out affecting twenty-seven plants. The centers of the strike were in Youngstown, Ohio, and Chicago. This was the site of the infamous Memorial Day incident, when the Chicago police attacked marching strikers with clubs, killing ten men. In the auto industry, Chrysler followed GM in recognizing the UAW, but Henry Ford resisted any dealings with the union until 1941. The struggle with Ford would include fierce fighting outside the mammoth River Rouge plant (Ford River Rouge Complex, NHL, 1978) in Detroit, built by Ford in the late 1920s. An attack by Ford guards on UAW leader Walter Reuther on an overpass at the plant gained national attention. Still, the CIO persisted and by the middle of World War II, the new federation had effected a greater unionization of the nation's mass production industries.

The CIO is primarily associated with organizing major industries such as steel, auto, and coal mining, but it was also important for bringing low wage workers, many of whom were from racial and ethnic minority groups excluded from unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, into the labor movement. A particularly strong example of this work was among Pecan shellers in Texas.

Soon after its formation, the CIO began organizing Mexican American workers in the Southwest because of their high representation in the regional labor force. Originally, CIO unions like the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA-CIO)

focused on organizing agricultural workers, but their extremely low wages rendered them unable to pay union dues and, as such, to sustain strike actions. The fierce antiunion attitude of farm owners was another major obstacle. Eventually, UCAPAWA moved out of the fields and into factories of industries adjacent to agriculture. In San Antonio, with the assistance of UCAPAWA organizers, "the most dramatic labor upheaval in an agriculture-allied industry involving Spanish-speaking workers unfolded in late January 1938," when thousands of pecan shellers, family members, and sympathizers engaged in a 37-day strike during which over 1,000 demonstrators were arrested and jailed.[70]

Mexican American women were at the forefront of the strike activity, sustaining morale and serving as strike leaders. Chief among them was Emma Tenayuca, a leftwing activist who brought her experience working in the Unemployed Councils and the Workers Alliance of America and the lessons she learned from participating in garment workers' strikes to this action, along with the political education she received from labor radicals who congregated in La Plaza del Zacate (Milam Park) when she was a child.[71]

The Southern Pecan Company in San Antonio was part of a landscape of small manufacturers in a state that supplied forty percent of the nation's pecans. Workers at these companies labored in sheds that lacked running water and indoor toilets as well as adequate ventilation. They operated seasonally on a contract basis, working from November through March. Ninety percent of the workers were women earning the lowest wages in the country—approximately $192 annually. During the Depression, conditions worsened, pushing pecan shellers in San Antonio to first go on strike in 1934 alongside garment workers in protest of low wages. Even though they gained little from this action, pecan workers again were pushed to strike after another round of wage cuts during the recession of 1937 put them in dire straits.

On Monday, January 31, 1938, an estimated 6,000 to 8,000 workers walked off their jobs in small pecan-shelling companies in response to a fifteen percent wage reduction. They elected Tenayuca as their leader, and even after police arrested and jailed her and other UCAPAWA organizers on charges of Communist agitation (Tenayuca was affiliated with the CPUSA), strikers continued to demonstrate around the city in places like Milam Park. The mostly female strike force encouraged their families to participate as well. City officials, church officials, middle-class organizations, and even the AFL denounced the strike as Communist, and the police began to crack down in a brutal fashion. According to historian Zaragosa Vargas, police teargassed strikers on eight occasions, and "men, women, and children were run down, dragged, clubbed, and kicked by a hostile police force." Women and children were arrested and sent to jail. The INS even got involved by arresting Mexican nationals until a Mexican consul formally protested. The brutality strikers endured sparked a state investigation into the police repression of the strike, which helped give labor organizers the stronger footing they needed. Eventually, UCAPAWA Local 172 formed and gained recognition as the pecan workers' sole bargaining agent. Workers gained a closed shop, increased wages, and a grievance committee among other union benefits, but their success was short-lived. The Fair Labor Standards Act, which passed in

[70] Vargas, Labor Rights are Civil Rights, 114, 122.
[71] Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights*, 125, 127-30, 132-33

June of that year, established a minimum wage that prompted many companies to mechanize the shelling process that left over 7,000 workers unemployed.[72]



Striking pecan shellers picketing on sidewalk in front of the Southern Pecan Shelling Company, San Antonio, TX, 1938 *(University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collection, San Antonio Light Photograph Collection)*

A few years prior to the Pecan Shellers Strike of 1938, labor organizers had attempted to organize another largely female low-wage workforce in the Southeast, this time in the textile industry. While industrial unions made strong gains nationally in the 1930s and 1940s, textile unionism in the South reached its peak with a strike in 1934 but began losing ground in the face of aggressive opposition from corporate managers and pro-business political leaders. The 1934 strike was initiated by the United Textile Workers of America (UTW), an affiliate of the AFL. Over 250,000 workers joined the UTW, spurred by their frustration over declining pay and deteriorating working conditions during the 1920s. Interestingly, the new production standards imposed by the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 actually exacerbated the poor working conditions. Facing higher labor costs, textile companies began dismissing workers and increasing productivity for those who remained on the job. When manufacturers talked of imposing additional wage and hourly reductions in 1934, workers responded by unionizing. Beginning on July 14, wildcat strikes swept across Alabama, pulling 20,000 workers out of the mills. Then the

[72] Vargas, Labor Rights are Civil Rights, 135, 139-40.

UTW called for a national strike in September that took an estimated 400,000 workers out of mills from Alabama to Maine, making it the largest industrial strike in American history.[73]

Although the strike began with tremendous enthusiasm, it began failing in its second week and fell apart within a month, although many union members protested when national UTW officials decided to end the walkout. In retrospect, the reasons for its failure are obvious. Workers and the UTW did not have the resources to wage a protracted struggle. Most workers lived in company housing, where they could be—and in many cases were—evicted for involvement in strike or union activities. Fierce competition within the industry and the effects of the Depression left cotton manufacturers unable to meet workers' demands for increased hours and wages. Manufacturers had huge inventories on hand—a byproduct of weak international demand for finished products—allowing them to wait out the strike. The UTW might have been more successful had the strike been delayed until economic conditions improved, but that would have required containing the emotional fervor that set the strike in motion—an unlikely prospect given workers' sentiments in the summer of 1934.[74]

The strike of 1934 in many ways represented the height of organized labor in the South. The seeds of the strike had been sown by the growth of southern textile unionism in the 1920s and, in particular, the strikes of 1929. However, the 1934 strike ultimately left workers disillusioned. Many simply tried to forget and attempted to restore a sense of normalcy to their lives. Blacklisting of strike leaders contributed to workers' desire to purge memories of the conflict. Union leaders and their families were driven out of the industry and forced to leave their homes. Over time, memories of the strike changed. Succeeding generations were likely to hear that "outsiders" brought the union in, not that southern mill hands had created one of the largest grass-roots labor organizations in American history.[75]

The bitter memories of the strike contributed to labor's limited success in organizing southern textile workers in the decades that followed. From 1935 to 1945, organized labor enjoyed its greatest growth in American history. Membership among non-farm workers rose from 3.6 to 14.3 million (38.5 percent of non-farm workers) nationally. Union membership grew in the South, but through the 1960s the proportion of organized workers in the region was half the rate for the remainder of the nation. Textiles, the largest and most important manufacturing industry in the region, remained largely nonunion. The overall result was a critical weakness in the South for organized labor, which in turn had significant implications for the national economy and southern politics.

There were some successes in organizing southern factory workers during this period, notably tobacco workers in North Carolina. In 1940, UCAPAWA began targeting southern tobacco workers after achieving successes organizing Mexican and Mexican Americans, especially

[73] Dan Vivian of the National Park Service contributed information on southern textile unionism and the strike of 1934 to this narrative. See also William J. Cooper, Jr., and Thomas E. Terrill, *The American South: A History* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1996), 2:654-655; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall et al., *Like A Family*, 289-357.
[74] Cooper and Terrill, *American South*, 2:655-656.
[75] Cooper and Terrill, *American South*, 2:656-657.

women, on the West Coast.[76] In 1940, the union secured its most noteworthy success in the region by organizing workers at R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company in Winston-Salem, North Carolina into Local 22. UCAPAWA was one of the most diverse, leftwing unions in the United States, and Local 22 was particularly known for training Black members in leadership roles and encouraging participation and leadership among Black women. Moranda Smith, the first Black woman to become an executive leader of any trade union in the United States, began as a leader of Local 22. Furthermore, the local exemplified the intersection of labor rights and civil rights in the South by becoming an important political force, registering thousands of Black voters. This political participation led to the election of a Black representative to the Winston-Salem Board of Alderman, defeating a White candidate for the first time.[77]

Unionism on the whole, however, failed to firmly take root in the South, despite a massive campaign to organize the region that the CIO initiated in 1946. In an effort dubbed "Operation Dixie," the CIO tried to recruit local organizers to unionize workers primarily in tobacco, lumber, and textiles; the AFL even launched its own retaliatory campaign in the region shortly thereafter. The odds, however, were decidedly against them. In the 1940s, the South emerged as a haven for industries seeking low-wage, nonunion labor. Southern politicians, eager to bring needed jobs to communities suffering from the continuing agricultural crisis, offered tax incentives, subsidies, and other forms of assistance to companies that located manufacturing plants in the South while simultaneously painting unions, especially those affiliated with the CIO, as bastions of Communism and advocates of integration. With the escalating Red Scare and rise of the postwar Civil Rights Movement, these tactics worked to discouraged white workers from joining CIO unions. As such, the crusade for southern industrial development, commonly known as "the selling of the South," was made possible in large part because southern workers displayed an ambiguous interest in organizing.[78]

Managerial and conservative political backlashes to the gains made by the CIO before and during World War II ushered in new antilabor legislation, specifically the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, that curbed organized labor's thrust and powers. The purging of radical organizers with the Cold War Red Scare of the late 1940s and 1950s sapped further energies from the movement. The growth of union bureaucracies and removing conflict from the shop floor and into negotiating rooms with union and management officials, government mediators, federal agencies, and courts dampened local worker insurgency and involvement. Stultification in industrial unionism would characterize much of organized labor during the 1950s.

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[76] See the Agricultural chapter for further information on UCAPAWA in the South and Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

[77] Shana L. Redmond, *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 155-56; Robert Korstad, "United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America," in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History Vol. III*, Eric Arnesen, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1415.

[78] James C. Cobb, *The Selling of the South: The Southern Crusade for Industrial Development, 1936-1980* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Cooper and Terrill, *American South*, 2:657-658. Southern Black workers were far more receptive to unions and largely ignored the red-baiting tactics of southern politicians see Michael K. Honey, "Operation Dixie, the Red Scare, and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing" in *American Labor and the Cold War: Grassroots Politics and Postwar Political Culture*, Robert W. Cherny, William Issel and Kieran Walsh Taylor, eds. (Rutgers University Press, 2004).

Labor Organizing and the Americanization of Low Wage Workers

The extraordinary success of the CIO is often attributed to the federal protections afforded the trade union movement in the National Labor Relations Act passed in 1935. The federal government's assistance to labor played an important role, but there are other significant factors.[79] One such factor centers on those who organized, joined, and led CIO-based strikes and other organizing initiatives. Younger leaders, eager to escape the conservatism of the AFL, saw an opportunity to make history. Under them was a cadre of skillful shop floor organizers, many of them Socialists and Communists, whose political convictions fueled their dedication and work. With them were millions of mass-production workers educated and politicized by the Great Depression. Many were second- and third-generation immigrants who, unlike their parents and grandparents, never entertained notions of returning to their homelands. They were in the United States to stay, citizens who wanted their families to enjoy a proper American standard of living.[80]

In many ways, the CIO organizers built their work on a foundation that was established by the Knights of Labor and the IWW. Both of these umbrella unions had sought to organize low wage immigrant laborers, as well as African American workers, though to varying degrees. Organizers, especially for radical labor groups, often directed their efforts towards racial and ethnic groups. When William Z. Foster worked for the National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers in the years following WWI, he recognized that the union was able to make inroads into the staunchly anti-union mill towns by "penetrating deep into the immigrant communities and conveying the union message to workers in their own languages." The Women's Trade Union League in Chicago (and later New York City) published an English primer in various languages that featured illustrated stories pertaining to labor activism. Many of the main characters were women living in ethnic urban enclaves whose experiences bore strong similarities to the tribulations that ethnic working-class women experienced in their own lives. In many ways, according to historian James Barrett, by featuring stories of strong women activists and their accomplishments, they provided "realistic role models" for working-class women. The significance of these early efforts is that, in addition to changing the nature of work for unskilled workers, they also had the effect of Americanizing immigrants by introducing them to national civic ideals. During the early years of the twentieth century, unions focused on civil rights such as free speech and encouraged immigrants to demand and defend these "American" rights. Furthermore, unions' emphasis on shared hardship and mutually-held beliefs helped to overcome ethnic divisions; workers responded to these kinds of programs better than to official Americanization efforts because the unions "stressed issues that were vital to the welfare of ethnic communities but simply could not be resolved without looking beyond their boundaries to class-based organization," according to Barrett. Indeed, many immigrant radicals appealed to

[79] The changing attitudes of some corporate executives are one consideration in understanding the CIO's success. Faced with difficult business times during the 1930s, they chose not to forfeit any market advantages with crippling strikes. Dealing on a total plant basis with the CIO brought stability to the shop floor, and corporate managers were well aware that, with politicians sympathetic to labor in national and local offices, they could not count on government help in quelling unrest.

[80] This standard of living included the fringe benefits lost during the depression (benefits guaranteed by union contract rather than made available through the good graces of their employers).

American ideals in demanding a better "American wage" and often employed patriotic rhetoric in their articulations of labor reform.[81]





(L) ***Protesting child labor at Labor Day parade, May 1, 1909, New York, NY*** *(LOC P&P, Bain)*
(R) ***Saturday night gathering of the Venetia Giulia fraternity, an International Workers' Order section made up of Italian immigrants, New York, NY, 1943*** *(Marjorie Collins, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

At the same time, ethnic workers developed their own form of American working-class culture, combining traditions from their home regions with the cultures and conditions of their new industrial settings. For instance, Sicilian workers carried a radical oral tradition from their homeland into the "little Italys" and other Italian neighborhoods in small cities like Tampa and Barre, Vermont, as well as in major urban centers like Chicago and New York City. Many organizers came directly from ethnic neighborhoods and were therefore able to tailor their message to an audience they knew well. During the garment industry strikes of 1909 and 1910, for instance, Italian and Jewish organizers went to homes of Italian and Jewish workers to explain the strikes and to sell the union.[82]

In some cases, immigrant workers had been steeped in a culture that advocated collectivization in their home countries, and they became leaders of organizing efforts in cities around the United States. However, because they directed their work towards non-English speaking workers, their efforts often went unrecognized. During the early years of the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee (SWOC), activists tried to organize the steel workers of Sparrow's Point, a division of Bethlehem Steel, in Baltimore County. The epicenter of these activities was O'Connor's, a small liquor store in the heart of Greektown, a neighborhood of Baltimore City. O'Connor's became a meeting spot where workers could learn how the union drives were progressing. The second floor of this two-story building became the headquarters for the SWOC, which would eventually become the United Steelworkers of America in 1943, a CIO union. When they wanted

[81] James R. Barrett, "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930," *Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (December 1992): 1009-1011, 1014-15. In 1921, during his infamous murder trial in Massachusetts, Niccola Sacco made an impassioned defense of anarchism on the stand, one that employed American iconography. When he tried to explain his opposition to WWI, he argued, "What is war? This war is not like…Abraham Lincoln's and [Thomas] Jefferson, to fight for the free country, for the better education, to give a chance to other people…" Nicola Sacco, "Statement on Anarchism," in *The Sacco and Vanzetti Case: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Michael M. Topp (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 119.

[82] Barrett, "Americanization from the Bottom Up," 1013

to hold larger meetings and events, the steelworkers rented a Finnish Hall in Highlandtown, an adjacent neighborhood.

Ellen Pinter was part of the Finnish community of Highlandtown, and her father worked at the steel mill in Sparrow's Point. She saw firsthand the effects of underemployment on the steel workers and their families during the Depression. Some only received work for one to two days a week; as a result, many families ran up grocery store debts or fell behind on rent. Several families took in boarders to try to make ends meet. Pinter took a job for $18 a week working for the SWOC around 1937-38 in the office on top of O'Connor's. Ellen recollected:

> I can vividly remember when the miners came to Baltimore and started the big organization drive of the CIO the men were pouring into that hall with their pockets just bulging with dollar bills as they were signing up men into the union. There was such a tremendous upsurge of interest in the union. Of course the mills were full of foreign-born people who knew the value of unions because they had come from European countries where they had been a little more politically astute. And Finns were aware of unionization and more progressive thought...Oh I can remember the Italians, the Finns, the Czechs, the Americans, they were organizing left and right then, in Bethlehem Steel Company.

Pinter also notes African American participation in the organizing activity—Finnish activists welcomed African Americans at their ethnic hall during the early days of organizing activity.[83]

During the early decades of the twentieth century, immigrant activists endured particular hardships that did not directly affect their native-born associates. During a period of heightened xenophobia that culminated in harsh immigrant restriction laws, they had the added burden of facing nativist attitudes and threats of deportation. One area in which these issues were particularly strong was the garment industry in California, an industry in which many ethnic women secured employment. Mexican women constituted three-quarters of the workforce; the rest were Italian, Russian, Jewish, and Anglo women. Conditions in the LA garment shops were among the worst in the nation, and forty percent of workers made less than five dollars a day, which was well below the California minimum wage. The industry's low wages and other instances of poor treatment were flagrant violations of the California Industrial Recovery Act, which was passed to bring the state's garment industry in line with codes established by the National Recovery Act. In the fall of 1933, 2000 dressmakers from eighty garment shops in Los Angeles walked off their jobs and onto picket lines to protest these conditions. The Los Angeles Garment Workers Strike, as it came to be known, garnered support from the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). The strikers turned to leading organizer Rose Pesotta for assistance. Soon, the union granted them a charter, which established the ILGWU Local 96.

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[83] Linda Zeidman, "Sparrow's Point, Dundalk, Highlandtown, Old West Baltimore," in *The Baltimore Book: New Views of Local History*, eds. Elizabeth Fees, Linda Shopes, and Linda Zeidman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 186-88; Karen Olson, *Wives of Steel: Voices of Women from the Sparrows Point Steelmaking Communities* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 30; Ellen Pinter, Site #1: Highlandtown, interview by Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project, 1978-1982 (January 30, 1980), OH 8297.204, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, MD.

The Mexican women who led this strike had a profound effect not only in the textile industry in the city, but also in their own community. Historian Zaragosa Vargas claims, "The Los Angeles dressmakers' strike is credited with initiating industrial unionism among blue-collar Mexicans in this notoriously antiunion city." Spanish-speaking organizers talked to workers in their neighborhoods—openly defying employers who threatened to report workers who joined the union to immigration officials. This threat, however, had a profound effect on the workers, for strong fears due to recent deportation efforts made many women fearful of joining the local. Organizers responded by using Spanish-radio broadcasts and kin networks to spread word of the importance of the union. This was very much a grassroots movement, with Mexican dressmakers leading the effort from the beginning.[84]

Mexican workers like the women of the Los Angeles Garment Workers Strike comprised a large percentage of the unskilled labor force in the Southwest, and the extent of the exploitation they suffered turned many immigrants and ethnic migrants into key players in the CIO organizing campaigns. Unlike many older unions that discriminated against Mexican workers, CIO organizers opened its ranks to them, knowing that if the CIO was going to succeed in this region, it would need the support of this major working-class demographic.[85] Yet the Mexican workers were not the only significant ethnic group in the region. Regional immigration and migration patterns also turned Asian immigrants into strong players in the early CIO drives in California and the Pacific Northwest throughout the 1930s, particularly in the canning industry.

In 1933, the Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers' Union Local 18257 began in Seattle. It was the first Filipino-led union, established by "Alaskeros," migrants who worked in Alaskan salmon canneries during the summer and labored in the farms and orchards of Washington, Oregon, and California during the rest of the year. After the United States took control of the Philippines in 1898, Filipinos were able to enter the country even after the federal government halted immigration from Asian countries in 1924. Filipino men often came to the United States seeking work and education. As it had been for many Asian immigrants, Seattle was the point of entry for most of these migrants, and it served as a major port where workers were recruited and shipped out to the Alaskan canneries.

At the canneries, Filipino men were subject to a dual system of labor in which they were given the most undesirable jobs (cutting and canning) where those above them got the more desirable jobs of fishing and contracting of other workers (labor recruiters). Two factors galvanized the Filipino grassroots organizing effort: the contract system of labor (wherein certain ethnic groups and people connected to the contractor were more apt to receive jobs) and anti-Filipino race riots in 1927-28 that spread from Washington to California, in which workers attacked and killed Filipino migrants and destroyed their bunkhouses.

With Virgil Duyungan serving as the initial president, the Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers' Union Local 18257 received an AFL charter on June 19, 1933, the first of its kind. The union's

[84] Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 83-89. The almost month-long strike ended on November 6, 1933, with arbitrations in which the employers promised to uphold the codes but did not recognize the union. Unfortunately, the shop owners reneged on many of their promises. Eventually, however, the ILGWU local gained industrial recognition in 1935.

[85] Vargas, Labor Rights are Civil Rights, 115.

first goal was to end the contract labor system, for most contractors would not hire unionized workers in favor of vulnerable recent migrants. On December 1, 1936, a labor contractor assassinated president Duyungan and Aurelio Simon, the union secretary, at a restaurant in Chinatown. But this did not stop the union. In 1937-38, the CWFLU opted to leave the AFL and join the more racially-inclusive CIO. After a unanimous vote, they became Local 7 of the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America. The union switched again after 1950 and became Local 37 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

The hall, which still stands in the Pioneer Square neighborhood in Seattle, served several important functions for its members and the local Filipino community. Besides being a site for social events—the hall was popular for the annual dances held there—it was the headquarters for a union that had a reputation for being the most militant Filipino union in the United States. Micah Ellison of the Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project writes, "Despite a large Filipino population that was dispersed throughout both the urban and rural Pacific Coast, Local 7 was seen as the one place during the summer where Filipinos in America could get a job en masse outside of farm work."[86]



(L) ***Production of B-17F (Flying Fortress) bombers, Boeing aircraft plant, Seattle, WA, 1942*** *(Andreas Feininger, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI); (R)* ***Production of C-47 transport planes, Douglas Aircraft Company plant, Long Beach, CA, 1942*** *(Alfred Palmer, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

Military Industrialization

Unionization in the nation's mass production industries represents a new stage in the history of manufacture in the United States. At the same time that the CIO was achieving organizing success, other kinds of shifts were occurring in American industry. Textiles, for example, the nation's first and still a leading industry, began to lose ground in the 1920s. Facing increased competition, venerable New England textile firms closed their doors or moved to the South to

[86] Micah Ellison, "The Local 7/Local 37 Story: Filipino American Cannery Unionism in Seattle, 1940-1959," Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, University of Washington (2005), https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/local_7.htm; Crystal Fresco, "Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers' Union 1933-39: Their Strength in Unity," Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, University of Washington (1999), https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/cwflu.htm.

take advantage of that region's low wage labor base. Southern textile companies, however, faced stiff competition themselves from cheap imports. Some specialized textile producers survived operating in niche markets, but others succumbed to a general standardization in consumer taste (fostered by new retail chain stores). Textile manufacture, a visible element in American industrialization, receded into the economic background.[87]

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, other leading industries appeared to be going the way of textiles—the depression saw a one-third reduction in industrial output—but bad economic times hid the successful emergence of new pursuits. Automobiles had already been established as a dominant industry, but newer trades such as electronics, aircraft, petroleum, and chemical and food processing would serve as the basis for a new surge in industrial activity for the nation once prosperous times returned.[88] Sectorial shifts marked American manufacture during and after the 1920s. But as important for industrial renewal would be the quantum growth in military goods production that accompanied World War II and the subsequent Cold War.

Before World War II, the production of military hardware figured minimally in America's rise to industrial supremacy. Gun manufacture occupied a chapter in the evolution of standardized parts production techniques. Both the Civil War and World War I saw expanded, but not sustained, military production. As early as the 1890s, major steel producers began to rely on orders from the United States Navy for armor plate. Still, it was not until World War II that military manufacture became a basic foundation block of the American economy.[89]

Military industrialization saw the building of new corridors of industry. With the exception of a number of locations in New England, military production during World War II and the Cold War occurred largely outside the great industrial heartland constructed in the late nineteenth century. Los Angeles and Orange County in southern California formed the most prominent band of military industry. A complementary strip emerged in the Pacific Northwest centered in Seattle, Washington, and an arc of military production sites appeared in the South stretching from Columbia, South Carolina, through Huntsville, Alabama, and Houston, Texas. Local boosterism, climate conditions, engineering expertise, congressional politics, relations between defense department planners and corporate executives, and serendipity contributed to the locations of military manufacture. All these factors, for example, figured in southern California's dominance in defense production. California in general experienced limited industrial development before the rise of military manufacture. The key prior industry was fish, fruit, and vegetable canning.

In the 1920s, several leading airplane manufacturers located their operation in Los Angeles. Local boosters and government incentives had lured them there, and retired air force officials

[87] The decline of textiles in the 1920s is treated in Philip Scranton, *Figured Tapestry: Production, Markets, and Power in Philadelphia Textiles, 1885-1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[88] Michael Bernstein, in *The Great Depression: Delayed Recovery and Economic Change in America, 1929-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), argues that the economic crisis of the 1930s was exacerbated by the eclipse of such old industries as textiles and the relative youth of newer trades, such as electronics.

[89] For the military industrialization during and after World War II, see: Roger Lotchin, ed., *The Martial Metropolis: U.S. Cities in War and Peace* (New York: Praeger, 1984); Roger Lotchin, *Fortress California, 1910-1961: From Warfare to Welfare* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Ann Markusen, ed., *The Rise of the Gun Belt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Bruce Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

who were active in these companies liked the warm climate. The airplane industry in Los Angeles thrived with expansion of local university engineering programs. These companies were perfectly situated during World War II to receive massive orders for air force bombers for the Pacific War campaign. After the war, local congressmen, with business leaders who had established close contacts with defense department officials, lobbied effectively to have military contracts continue to flow to the region.

Matters were simpler elsewhere. Local engineering expertise and effective politicking saw key aerospace contracts awarded to firms just outside Boston, Massachusetts, and submarine and helicopter orders to companies like the Sikorsky helicopter factory in Connecticut (with textiles in decline, military production kept industry alive in New England).[90] Southern communities after World War II saw the building of military production facilities in the region largely through the long-standing control of key committees in Congress by incumbent southern congressmen. Finally, the Seattle area owes its place in military manufacture to William Boeing. He started manufacturing airplanes in the city before World War I and oversaw the company's slow expansion. Later, with the help of key politicians, the firm prospered through defense department contracts. Companies in America's old industrial heartland also joined the military mobilization of World War II—car manufacturers in Detroit produced tanks rather than automobiles. But during the subsequent Cold War, they did not directly participate in the military manufacture of the era. Meeting consumer demand, less engineering expertise, and ineffective lobbying left America's old industrial cities outside the military industrial fold.

Military production facilities established during and after World War II offered varied kinds of work and differed from other manufactories. Military goods makers had large engineering and technical staffs. A core of skilled machinists and other skilled workers involved in parts production comprised a large segment of the production work force. However, women hired at low wages assembled basic components on an assembly-line basis. Highly skilled workers and technicians assembled modules according to particular specification; the same was true for final assemblage. Outside of the South, military production workers toiled under union agreements and received relatively high wages. Lucrative government contracts to military producers resulted in well-paid jobs and shielded workers in these firms from the various recessions that marked the post-World War II American economy—that is, until recently. With the end of the Cold War and cutbacks in defense spending, workers in communities that prospered for two generations through military production now share with other manufacturing workers the experience of industrial decline—of permanent plant closings and massive job loss.

[90] For further information on this factory as well as others like it, see the National Historic Landmark Program's *American Aviation Theme Study*.



Economically unprofitable mill buildings for sale, Lowell, MA, 1930 *(Lowell National Historical Park)*

Deindustrialization

America's industrial history begins in the 1790s with home and craft shop production and a fascinating debate on manufacture. Two hundred years later with the rapid erosion of the nation's industrial base that history appears to be coming to an end. Plant closings have occurred in such a flurry in the last two decades that it is difficult to gain a proper perspective on developments.

Contemporary analysts focus on specific events in the 1970s and 1980s to explain industrial decline. The oil embargo crises of the era, hyperinflation, high interest rates, and foreign competition are cited as chief reasons for the recent loss of millions of manufacturing jobs.[91] Only a few scholars have attempted to cast the current situation in a longer historical framework. Historians can point to the last decades of the nineteenth century for the first instances of deindustrialization. Entrepreneurial failures in family-owned businesses, shifting consumer tastes and technologies, and the early search for low wage labor contributed to the disappearance of manufacturing firms from cities. The 1920s mark another period of decline. Capital flight to low-wage areas continued, but the coming of a mass consumer culture proved the death knell to

[91] For a general contemporary analyses of deindustrialization, see Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982) and Michael Piore and Charles Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity* (New York: Basic Books, 1984). The decline of the steel industry in recent decades has gained special attention; see David Bensman and Roberta Lynch, *Rusted Dreams: Hard Times in a Steel Community* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987); William Serrin, *Homestead: The Glory and Tragedy of an American Steel Town* (New York: Times Books, 1992); and Mark Reutter, *Sparrows Point: Making Steel—The Rise and Ruin of American Industrial Might* (New York: Summit Books, 1988).

specialty firms throughout the nation's existing industrial heartland. The 1920s saw a renewed merger movement and decisions by national corporate leaders to liquidate certain facilities. They aimed to close older inefficient plants and curb overproduction. Such decisions left communities without companies that supplied manufacturing jobs for generations.[92] The evolving nature and purview of the corporation are key elements. In more recent times for example, telecommunications and transportation improvements have allowed for global operations. As foreign competition has pushed companies to take advantage of low wage labor outside the boundaries of the country, corporations have shifted production not from one community to another in the United States, as in the past, but to overseas locations. The move from a national to a global corporate capitalist system has successively contributed to manufacturing job loss.[93]

One important impact of industrial job loss is related to a group outside the larger story of American manufacture—African Americans. Apart from some exceptions in the South, African Americans through the 1920s and 1930s do not figure significantly in the nation's industrial history for one reason: exclusion. Hiring practices of employers and informal and organized opposition from White workers left few positions for African Americans in northern manufacture. During large-scale strikes, some employers hired African Americans to maintain production levels, which further exacerbated tensions between White and Black workers. Officials at the Cambria steel mills, for example, recruited thousands of Black workers to serve as strikebreakers during the 1919 Steel Strike; an estimated 30,000 Black workers entered the steel industry during this uprising. Labor organizers in the steel mills had a history of either ignoring African Americans or segregating them to such an extent that most Black workers did not have an allegiance to steel unions during the early decades of the twentieth century. Some even saw strikebreaking as an opportunity to circumvent racist hiring practices that, during normal conditions, had restricted them from entering the workforce.[94]

Pressure from Black organizations and the hiring decisions of individuals such as Henry Ford opened some doors in the 1920s, but the greater employment of African Americans awaited World War II and federal anti-discrimination edicts. African Americans began to occupy a growing place in Northeastern and Midwestern industry in the 1940s, but at the same time those regions experienced long-term industrial decay. African Americans (and Latinos) were newcomers to the northern industrial scene when industry was no longer expanding in the region and when manufacturing jobs were shifting overseas; ultimately, they would inherit districts of abandoned factories.[95] Sometimes, as they had in the past, African American workers launched their own organizing efforts in the face of discrimination coming from both employers and unions. In May 1968, a series of wildcat strikes broke out in the Dodge Main Plant in Detroit. Although both Black and White workers initiated the strike over production-line speedups, Dodge officials primarily blamed African American workers and either suspended or fired dozens of African American employees. When the UAW failed to defend these workers, a group

[92] John Cumbler, A Social History of Economic Decline: Business, Politics, and Work in Trenton (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989).

[93] Robert Ross and Kent Trachte, *Global Capitalism: The New Leviathan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

[94] Brown, Cambria Iron Company, 184.

[95] Past deindustrialization has played a role in the nation's current urban problems. On deindustrialization and African Americans, see Joe William Trotter, *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) and Licht, *Getting Work*.

of ten African Americans launched the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) to fight the dismissals and the general conditions of racial prejudice in the shops. As a radical group that emerged during a heightened period of Black Nationalism, DRUM was a Black-only organization that worked to organize Black workers both inside and outside of the auto plants. In addition to boycotting restaurants and convenience stores near the plants that refused to hire Black workers, DRUM organized a strike on July 8 that severely hurt production at the Chrysler plant for three days. Although the strike was short-lived, the organization inspired Black workers in other industries; soon workers at other Detroit auto plants as well as Blue Cross and Blue Shield, United Parcel Service, Henry Ford Hospital, and the *Detroit News* began their own Revolutionary Union Movements. Thus, even in the wake of industrial decline, workers—particularly those who faced rampant discrimination in both good times and bad—kept the union movement alive, adapting it to suit the changing political and cultural circumstances of post-industrial America.[96]

Thomas Jefferson worried that industrialization would generate inequalities that would destroy all possibilities for a true democratic republic. But he did not foresee that manufacturing jobs would provide a foothold for many generations of newcomers to the United States, and that American industrial workers would collectively make their jobs better compensated, more secure, and more dignified. Today, new jobs are being created in the service and white-collar sectors; but these do not provide the same upward job mobility and financial security, such as pensions, of the lost manufacturing positions. Whether economic prosperity is sustainable with permanent losses in manufacturing employment remains to be seen.



Former textile mills converted to apartments and business space, Biddeford, ME, c. 2020 *(Anne Post Poole)*

[96] Kieran Taylor, "American Petrograd: Detroit and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers" in *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below During the Long 1970s*, eds. Aaron Brenner et al. (London: Verso, 2010), 318-320.

TRANSPORTATION LABOR: MARINER, RAILROAD, AND TRUCKING[1]



Crewmen turning a capstan on deck at South St., New York, NY, 1904 *(San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park)*

Until the rise of the new labor history in the 1960s, workers in the transportation sector of the American economy were rarely the subjects of serious scholarship. Skilled workers in the railroad industry prompted occasional discussion, particularly in relation to such massive upheavals as the strikes of 1877, 1885-1886, 1894, and 1922. The ability to shut down or disrupt commerce commanded the notice of journalists, corporate managers, government officials, and,

[1] This context was provided by Eric Arnesen, James R. Hoffa Teamsters Professor of Modern American Labor History and Vice Dean for Faculty and Administration, Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, George Washington University and Rachel Donaldson, Associate Professor of History at College of Charleston. Dr. Arnesen specializes in African American labor and in particular on work, race, employment discrimination, racial identity, and labor activism. His books include *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (Harvard University Press, 2001), *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (Oxford University Press, 1991), and the co-edited *Labor Histories, Class, Politics and the Working-Class Experience* (University of Illinois Press, 1998). Dr. Donaldson has published on the cultural politics of the folk music revival. Her books include *"I Hear America Singing": Folk Music and National Identity, 1930-1970* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014) and (co-authored with Ronald D. Cohen) *Roots of the Revival: American and British Folk Music in the 1950s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014). She is a historian of labor and cultural history and a historic preservationist.

later, historians. But largely invisible in the historical literature were low wage laborers who laid and maintained the nation's railroad tracks, dredged rivers, dug canals, or transported goods on and off the docks of port towns and cities. In recent years, transportation workers have received more attention from labor historians (although they have received less examination than artisans or skilled workers in manufacturing). This essay explores the history of labor in transportation—pre-industrial maritime commerce, nineteenth century river-borne commerce, canal building, longshore labor, construction and operation of railroads, and the rise of trucking in the twentieth century. In addition, the essay highlights the existence of sites or landmarks that symbolize the labor or struggles of workers in these sectors.

Early American Watermen

Proximity to water influenced the location of most towns and villages in the colonial and early national era, just as it would well into the early nineteenth century. Access provided by the Atlantic Ocean and various rivers, bays, and streams allowed European colonists to settle along the eastern coast of North America and to engage in vigorous commerce with Europe and Great Britain. Water-borne transportation enabled people and goods to move readily from one place to another.

The coastal region of South Carolina, a colony founded in the late seventeenth century, is a case in point. Transatlantic slave trade linked White European slave traders, White colonists seeking to purchase slaves, and enslaved Africans in a brutal and exploitative circuit of exchange. In addition, White colonists engaged in extensive trade with both England and other slave societies in the Caribbean, exporting to the latter foodstuffs in exchange for, among other things, more slaves. Within the colony itself, river travel linked plantations and towns in the low country, where the majority of the colony's population resided. Before the construction of passable roads, enslaved African and African American workers performed a range of economic tasks. While most enslaved people labored in agriculture, a smaller number were involved in commerce and transportation.[2] Black boat crews, rowing from plantation to plantation, provided, in historian Peter Wood's words, "the backbone of the lowland transportation system during most of the colonial era, moving plantation goods to market and ferrying and guiding whites from one landing to another."[3] White colonists' reliance upon Black labor in colonial transportation generated a "steady demand for ships' hands in the coastal colony," which, in turn, afforded some mobility and autonomy to these slaves.

From the colonial era through roughly 1830, the principal cities of the Atlantic seaboard—Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Baltimore—were "essentially depots for transoceanic

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[2] Indeed, from the late seventeenth through at least the mid-eighteenth century, planters in the growing colony of South Carolina remained dependent on slave's skills and stamina for carrying out agricultural production, skilled craftwork, and the transportation of goods. This significance further points to a need for a theme study on forms of enslaved or forced labor.

[3] Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1974), 203, 114, 179. Working in "close proximity" to both European colonists and Native Americans, slaves traveled on the "slender boats...[that] were the central means of transportation in South Carolina for two generations while roads and bridges were still too poor and infrequent for easy land travel." Boats made from hollowed out cypress logs were poled, rowed, and paddled through "the labyrinth of lowland waterways."

shipping, and their labor force was largely tied to maritime commerce."[4] Historian Gary Nash provides the most detailed portrait of life and labor in colonial and revolutionary-era cities, examining what he calls the "web of seaport life." "Water dominated the life of America's northern seaport towns in the seventeenth century," he argues, "dictating their physical arrangement, providing them with their links to the outer world, yielding up much of their sustenance, and subtly affecting the relationships among the different groups who made up these budding commercial capitals...The colonial seaports existed primarily as crossroads of maritime transport and commercial interchange."[5] The North American colonies were an integral part of England's mercantilist empire, importing manufactured goods and people—wealthy colonists, indentured servants, independent artisans and laborers, and African slaves—and exporting raw materials such as tobacco, rice, furs, grain, cattle, and timber.

Trade in this era was governed by the vagaries of weather, the change of seasons, fluctuations in commercial demand, and international politics and war. During the winter, ice made water transportation impossible in the North, while hurricanes in the West Indies and the southern colonies wreaked havoc with sailing schedules. The outbreak of war could halt commerce for varying periods of time.[6] As a result, work for the labor force that loaded and unloaded the ships or sailed them across the Atlantic was rarely steady and always unpredictable. It was impossible for employers of waterfront labor to impose the kinds of work and time discipline that manufacturers developed in workshops and factories during the early years of the Industrial Revolution. (The irregularity and unpredictability of work did not vanish with the passing of time. In the early twentieth century, one social reformer noted that the "instability of the weather and other unavoidable delays of a great port add elements of uncertainty...that seem to leave [ship loading and unloading]...for the moment outside of the great domain of organized transportation."[7])

Maritime workers played critical roles in the events leading up to the American Revolution. Sailors and dock workers, together with artisans, journeymen, and day laborers, participated in crowd actions against British colonial officials and policies in the 1760s and 1770s. With the enforcement of the Stamp Act in 1765, for instance, mariners and other urban workers in the colony of New York marched down Broadway to Fort George, along the way threatening supporters of the British policy, smashing thousands of windows, and hanging the governor in effigy. Maritime workers joined craftsmen in forming chapters of the Sons of Liberty, participated in boycotts of merchants who imported English goods, and pressured officials to issue "clearances to ships without stamped papers."[8] In the Boston Massacre of 1770, one of the first victims was Crispus Attucks, a fugitive slave seaman who was killed by British soldiers in

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[4] David Montgomery, "The Working Classes of the Pre-Industrial American City, 1780-1830," *Labor History* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1968): 3-4.

[5] Gary B. Nash, The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 3.

[6] Nash, The Urban Crucible, 55, 57.

[7] Charles Barnes, *The Longshoremen* (New York: Survey Associates, 1915), 1.

[8] Nash, *The Urban Crucible*, 301-02, 308; Jesse Lemisch, "The Radicalism of the Inarticulate: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," in *Dissent: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, ed. Alfred F. Young (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1968), 39-82; Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

front of the city's Custom House. In the words of one contemporary in 1775, seamen, fishermen, and harbor workers served as an "army of furious men, whose actions are all animated by a spirit of vengeance and hatred" against the English, whose policies had hurt them economically and who had destroyed "the liberty of their country."[9]

Contributing to seamen's particular hostility to the British in the Revolutionary era was their longstanding grievance against impressment by the British Royal Navy. In 1757, for example, the British forcibly impressed some 800 New Yorkers in a nighttime roundup. "From the very beginning," Jesse Lemisch writes, "the history of impressment in America is a tale of venality, deceit, and vindictiveness." Seamen responded before and during the Revolutionary era by escaping capture and by violence—engaging in fistfights and riots. In 1747, members of Boston's "lower class" were "beyond measure enraged" by impressment, noted colonial official Thomas Hutchinson. A crowd numbering several hundred attacked a British naval lieutenant, sheriff, and deputy. After descending on the Town House, they insisted that the General Court arrest those officers involved in impressment and demanded the release of those who had been impressed.[10]

Canals and Canal Builders in the Early Republic

The "Canal Era" spanned the years from the 1780s, when the first efforts at construction began, to the 1850s, when canals were largely eclipsed by the rise of the railroads. The canal industry, historian Peter Way argues, played a leading role in the uneven transition to industrial capitalism.[11] Canals opened up new markets by linking distant regions, many for the first time. The construction of such grand and expensive undertakings required large sums of capital and the creation of new managerial strategies. But lack of labor and money hindered efforts. Canal construction grew slowly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By 1816, the United States could boast a mere one hundred miles of canals; most, like the four-mile canal circumnavigating the falls above Richmond in 1785 or the twenty-two-mile canal linking the Santee and Cooper rivers in South Carolina, were relatively short in length.

Only in the second decade of the nineteenth century did canal building truly come of age. The building of the 364-mile Erie Canal, which linked Albany on the Hudson River to Buffalo on Lake Erie, represented a quantitative and qualitative leap forward and ushered in a "transportation revolution" that affected commerce, industry, and agriculture. Completed in 1825, the Erie became a conduit for the flow of both population and goods; it increased the ease of migration, reduced the cost of transporting goods, and accelerated the commercialization of

[9] Quoted in Lemish, "The Radicalism of the Inarticulate," 54. For a discussion of the world of 18th-century sailors, see Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[10] Lemish, "The Radicalism of the Inarticulate," 45, 48-49.

[11] Peter Way, *Common Labour: Workers and the Digging of North American Canals, 1780-1860* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). The early republic also witnessed the rise of private and state-sponsored projects to build turnpikes. By the early 19th century, some 55 private turnpike construction companies received charters in Pennsylvania, 57 in New York, and over 100 in Massachusetts.

parts of upstate New York.[12] Other states and cities became promoters of their own canal schemes, fearful of the economic consequences of being bypassed by new commercial routes.

Building canals required not only large infusions of capital, but also the assembling of vast numbers of laborers to perform the arduous work—felling trees, digging, blasting, and carpentry—required to carve canals out of the earth. At its height in the 1830s, the canal construction industry relied upon some 35,000 people. Canal construction required a larger number of workers than almost any other economic enterprise in the early republic. Reflecting what Way calls "the fragmented nature of the labour market at this time and merchant capital's willingness to use whatever materials were at hand," the industry relied upon an extremely diverse work force composed of enslaved African Americans, indentured White servants, and White free laborers. In the South, the slave system adapted accordingly. "Most southern canals and navigation improvements," Robert Starobin writes, "were excavated by slave labor." Initially, canal companies hired enslaved workers from their owners for a specified period (the hiring-out method), but over time they "converted to direct slave ownership" because of the difficulty in procuring hired slaves and the greater financial savings derived from owning them. Southern canal projects—including the Brunswick and Altamaha, the Dismal Swamp, the Muscle Shoals, the Barataria and Lafourche, the Rivanna, the Roanoke, the Bayou Boeuf, the James River and Kanawha, the Cape Fear & Deep River Navigation Works, and the Santee—were completed partially or entirely by slave labor.[13]

Despite the persistence of slavery outside the South in the decades after the American Revolution, canal companies in the mid-Atlantic and the Northeast turned to indentured or free White laborers to meet their demand for workers. Indentured servitude had a long history in colonial America; in exchange for the cost of passage, food, clothing, and housing, servants would legally bind themselves to masters for a specified period of time, during which they renounced their right to migrate or change employers. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the system of indentured servitude was in steep decline. Unfree White labor "proved fractious by running away, stealing and fighting," Way argues, leading canal companies "outside the South to turn increasingly to free labor."[14] At the outset of the nineteenth century, free laborers were native-born White men and increasingly immigrants. By the 1830s, the majority of common laborers in canal construction were Irish.

The on-the-job character of canal work remained difficult throughout the canal age. Canallers worked outdoors, which meant constant exposure to the elements. Daylight often set the hours of work: in winter, a day's work might last between eight and ten hours, in summer between twelve and fourteen. The range of backbreaking tasks remained large. Grubbing involved clearing land by felling trees with axes and removing rocks with picks (stump removal required pulling by oxen, digging, and in some cases, even blasting). Next came embankment, which required the construction of the canal's sides (when the canal was above ground level), or excavation, which

[12] The ideological consequences on the people of upstate New York are analyzed in Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); see also Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950).

[13] Way, *Common Labour*, 31; Robert S. Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 28-29.

[14] Way, Common Labour, 27.

required digging through and removal of vegetation, soil, sand, and rock (when the canal was below ground level). Tons of debris were removed in wheelbarrows or carts pulled by horses or oxen. In some cases, the excavation of rock required canallers to hand-drill a hole, pack it with powder, insert and light a fuse, and blast the recalcitrant object. (Blasting was also necessary in the dangerous process of tunneling through mountains). Lastly, skilled workers, including masons and stonecutters, constructed watertight locks. In sum, writes Way, "At work, the canaller was a digging, clawing, tunneling, lock-building machine—a pumping and pulling piston."[15]



(L) ***C & O Canal, Williamsport, MD, 1904*** *(LOC P&P, Detroit) (R)* ***Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, Paw-Paw Tunnel, Allegany County, MD, 1960*** *(Jack E. Boucher, LOC P&P HABS MD-810))*

Canallers' conditions of life and labor remained harsh. Workers experienced irregular employment that cut into earnings; long days of hard and dangerous work; unsanitary and primitive work camps; harsh environmental conditions (exposed to extreme heat in summer and cold in winter); periodic epidemics; and, by the 1830s, declining pay rates. The makeshift work camps (in essence, shantytowns) in which most male canallers lived offered few amenities. Men often greatly outnumbered women (who worked as cooks and clothes cleaners), having left families behind while carrying out seasonal labor. Usually, contractors provided food and shelter as part of agreed-upon payment, but because of the temporary nature, cabins or bunkhouses were primitive. Workers suffered the consequences of unscrupulous management: contractors often mismanaged payrolls or ran off with funds designated to pay the work force.

These conditions gave laborers reason to resist, and they did so both individually and collectively. Enslaved laborers and indentured servants absconded, while free wage workers not only quit in large numbers (transience was an important, if informal, form of canallers' resistance) but fought back physically, formed secret societies, and struck, with or without rudimentary unions. "Workers rioted and struck virtually everywhere canals were dug," Way writes, "with a regularity that made the industry perhaps the most significant source of collective action among labourers in this period."[16] In Williamsport, Maryland, for example, C&O Canal laborers engaged in a "kind of guerilla war" in January 1834. In unsettled economic times—a contractor was unable to pay his workers and tensions over access to remaining jobs increased—

[15] Way, *Common Labour*, 143; also see 135-142.
[16] Way, *Common Labour*, 203.

factions of Irish laborers fought one another in an effort to drive competitors from the labor market and secure work for themselves. Two companies of federal troops dispatched from Baltimore suppressed the rioters by arresting thirty-five participants and occupying the labor camps for the winter's duration.[17] Similar ethnic and labor violence broke out that same year between factions of Irish and Germans outside Point of Rocks, Maryland. These outbreaks of labor conflict were not isolated incidents: between 1834 and 1840, the C&O company faced "at least ten significant disturbances and virtually continuous labor unrest," in which the state militia intervened five times and federal troops once. At the canal's Paw Paw Tunnel in 1836, workers insisted on the discharge of the contractor's manager, backing up their demand with force. On other occasions, workers protested the non-payment of wages, as did C&O tunnelers who descended on Oldtown, in western Maryland, where they "ransacked several buildings." Repression proved to be a common response to canallers' protests. The Oldtown protest was crushed by the militia, which arrested ten leaders. From 1820 to 1949, the American and Canadian armies suppressed at least thirty-two strikes or riots.[18]

Canallers possessed little power to alter the conditions of their labor. While craftsmen often had valuable and even irreplaceable skills, as well as deep social and political ties to communities (affording them more political influence), low wage canal laborers demonstrated little ability to alter their plight. Employers easily secured assistance from state and federal government, and most canal workers' protests or uprisings were crushed by military intervention. Canallers "had difficulty even grasping what was happening to them," Way concludes, "and could only fight a holding action in an attempt to stem the worst effects" of industrial capitalism's forward march: "While participants in the process, they were very much driven by forces beyond their control."[19] Their cultural resources and agency notwithstanding, canal workers simply could not match the power of their employers.

Low wage canal workers' ideological perspectives differed from the republicanism and craft pride of urban artisans often studied by labor historians. Most canallers remained outside the formal political system, often failing to meet residency requirements. While ethnicity sometimes formed the basis for community, it also "promoted sectarian warfare" and ethnic and racial feuding. Canallers drank heavily and fought with outsiders and among themselves. "Vice, violence and criminality" were "real problems that pulled at the seams of group unity."[20]

[17] Way, *Common Labour*, 200-202.
[18] Way, *Common Labour*, 200-228.
[19] Way, *Common Labour*, 195, 166, 17.
[20] Way, *Common Labour*, 166, 167. Appropriately, Way's portrait of canallers' lives and culture is never romantic, for he calls needed attention to the underside of working-class culture that was nurtured by the process of capital accumulation.



George Caleb Bingham, "The Jolly Flatboatmen," 1846 *(National Gallery of Art, Patron's Permanent Fund)*

Men on the River: Flatboats, Keelboats, and Steamboats

Natural inland rivers constituted even more crucial transportation arteries than canals. In 1811, before the advent of the steamship, commerce in the trans-Appalachian West along the Mississippi, Ohio, and Missouri river systems relied upon flatboats and keelboats that served the growing number of riverside communities. Keelboats were long and narrow (running between forty and eighty feet in length), carrying a crew of roughly ten men. Although the boats could travel from Pittsburgh to New Orleans in six weeks, the return trip could take as long as four-and-a-half months. Thus, keelboats made only one round trip annually. The up-river trip required the full strength of the keelboat's crew, whose members used poles and oars literally to push the boat up-river against the current. Legends of tremendous strength and heroism surrounded early keelboatmen, who were described as "half horse, half-alligator;" the most famous of these boatmen was Mike Fink, "King of the Keelboatmen." While the expansion of steamboat traffic on western rivers did not destroy the keelboat trade, it did diminish the keelboats' importance.[21]

Flatboats, in contrast, continued to survive well into the steamboat age. Unlike keelboats, flatboats made only one-way trips downriver, carrying northern products southward. On average, these easily constructed vessels ran sixty feet long and fifteen feet across. Described as floating,

[21] Walter Blair and Franklin J. Meine, *Mike Fink: King of Mississippi Keelboatmen* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1933); Mildred L. Hartsough, *From Canoe to Steel Barge on the Upper Mississippi* (University of Minnesota Press, 1934); Edith McCall, *Conquering the Rivers: Henry Miller Shreve and the Navigation of America's Inland Waterways* (LSU Press, 1984); Leland D. Baldwin, *The Keelboat Age on Western Waters* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1941).

"large square boxes," they were built in a number of river cities—Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Louisville, to mention a few. When flatboats reached their destination, they were broken up and the wood sold as scrap. Flatboat crews then faced the task of returning north. Until the early nineteenth century, many did so on foot, walking the hazardous "Natchez Trace" by the thousands annually; after steamships began navigating western rivers regularly, many flatboatmen paid their $3 for passage on deck. Although their heyday occurred in the 1840s, flatboats continued to transport goods through the end of the century.

Working conditions on flatboats remained difficult into the nineteenth century. Crews were exposed to extreme weather, insects, and robbers. These men lacked access to medical care; they usually cooked meals in a planed sandbox located on the deck. Despite relatively high wages, the work was temporary, and after each voyage flatboatmen were discharged to find their way home and to secure new employment. "The early western boatmen were, above all, frontiersmen," historian Michael Allen concludes in his portrait of flatboatmen: "They lived and worked on the rough edge of civilized American society and behaved accordingly." In the early 1930s, two authors described them as ex-soldiers, former Indian scouts, "Jolly French Canadians," and the "toughest farm boys, who longed for a life less drab than farms provided." Flatboatmen deserved their reputation for rough living—including fighting, gambling, and heavy drinking. More than 200,000 men, Allen concludes, found employment on western river flatboats during the steamship age.[22]

But the conditions of the trade, and the character of the men who worked in it, were not static. Before the nineteenth century, French Canadian rivermen dominated the flatboat crews of the western rivers. Following the American Revolution, they were replaced by native-born European Americans of English, Scotch, and Scotch Irish background (who Allen calls the "famed Kentucky boatmen"). By the early nineteenth century, some Germans, a small number of free Blacks, and a somewhat larger number of enslaved African Americans—particularly along southern rivers—also joined crews. (Enslaved workers generally labored in the Yazoo basin and along the lower Mississippi as crewmembers on the flatboats that carried cypress lumber.) Yet in the pre-Civil War decades, conditions got better in the flatboat trade as river improvements increased, flatboat construction was more dependable and size increased, and steamboats offered a speedy return up-river voyage. The quality of food improved as new stoves were installed and, in some cases, women were employed as cooks on larger flatboats. Although flatboat crews continued to attract farmers and especially young single men, the "new flatboatmen" included growing numbers of married men.[23]

The practical application of steamboating in 1807 (and its introduction on the Mississippi river in 1811) was made possible by the design innovations and entrepreneurial drive of Robert Fulton. The steamboat ushered in a new stage in water-borne commerce, making possible economical,

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[22] Blair and Meine, *Mike Fink*, 37; Michael Allen, *Western Rivermen: Ohio and Mississippi Boatmen and the Myth of the Alligator Horse* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 172.

[23] The new boatmen in the steamship era, Allen concludes, were family men: the "'average' flatboatman of this period was a white, British-descended Ohio Valley male in his mid-twenties;" most "hailed from the Old Northwest, especially Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois." Allen, *Western Rivermen,* 93, 172. Also see Michael Allen, "The Ohio River: Artery of Movement," in *Always a River: The Ohio River and the American Experience*, ed. Robert L. Reid (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 105-129.

long-distance up-river travel and trade.[24] From the 1820s through 1850 and beyond, hundreds of steamboats traveled the nation's western rivers annually. Not only were steamboats larger and more expensive than keel or flatboats, but also division of labor was more complex and the labor force more ethnically diverse. Crew size varied according to boat size. Small crews were made up of four or five hands, while the largest might require well over one hundred workers; the average crew at mid-century on the western rivers was roughly twenty-six. At the top of the employment hierarchy in terms of authority, skill, and compensation were officers (including the captain), who were overwhelmingly native-born European Americans. Cabin crews attended to both officers and the deck crews. Described as "little more than a hotel staff transferred to the river," cabin crew consisted of cooks, waiters, stewards, cabin boys, and chambermaids, and received the lowest wages of any group of steamboat workers. Deck crews (about half or more of the total crew) were often composed of unskilled and young men who were migratory workers facing irregular employment. Their work, by all accounts, was difficult: in addition to on-board labor, deck crews also "served as brawn and muscle men," moving cargo on and off the boat with little help from mechanical or other aids.[25]

The ethnic and racial composition of steamboat crews changed more dramatically than did those in other sectors of inland water transportation. In the 1840s and 1850s, increasing numbers of German and Irish immigrants replaced native-born White Americans on these crews. Only below St. Louis did African American slaves work on deck crews before the Civil War, although after the war emancipated slaves moved into deck work and dominated crews on both the lower and upper Mississippi river. Often excluded from stable community life and the object of racial characterizations and scorn, the "roustabouts," as Black deckhands were called, became staples in travel literature in the postbellum era. The average roustabout was a "strong black fellow, who has probably been a slave," one 1874 journalist observed. He frequented "low dens" and "squanders his hard earned money." With "no bedding or blanket to protect him from the cold when asleep," the roustabout was constantly on call, often "obliged to work thirty-six hours or longer without rest except for meals."[26] Indeed, roustabouts were often viewed as "perhaps the lowest class of labor," driven "like beasts by their overseers—degradation causing brutality and brutality causing degradation," in the words of one late nineteenth century writer sympathetic to their plight.[27] As late as 1940, novelist and river writer Ben Lucien Burman described the Mississippi river roustabouts as having "little changed with time."[28] Yet much had changed, for the steamboats' golden age was short-lived. By mid-century, the railroad was competing with river steamboats, replacing them as less expensive means of moving agricultural and other products to designated markets.

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[24] Mildred L. Hartsough, *From Canoe to Steel Barge on the Upper Mississippi* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1934); Robert Greenhalgh Albion, *The Rise of New York Port, 1815-1860* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1967), 143-64.

[25] Louis C. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers: An Economic and Technological History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), 442-78.

[26] "The Roustabouts of the Mississippi," *New Orleans Republican*, August 2, 1874. Also see Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 103-06.

[27] Charles B. Spahr, "America's Working People. IV. The Negro as an Industrial Factor," *The Outlook* (6 May 1899): 35.

[28] Ben Lucien Burman, *Big River to Cross: Mississippi Life Today* (Garden City, New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1943).



Scene on a New York dock—stevedores unloading a ship, illustration by Ivan Pranishnikoff, for Harper's Weekly, 1877 *(NYPL, The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Picture Collection)*

Port Labor in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The maritime and transportation labor force of port cities from the colonial era through the early twentieth century was heterogeneous. In the pre-Civil War era, various combinations of free and unfree laborers performed low wage dock work.[29] After the American Revolution, an expanding industrial sector barred most Blacks, leaving a small number to work as independent artisans, shop keepers, and professionals, and others to work at the "bottom of the job hierarchy," in Nash's words, as domestic servants and common laborers.[30] Black men served on ships. In the nineteenth century, they "consistently signed aboard ship in disproportionately large numbers relative to their strength in the northern states' populations as a whole." (Historian W. Jeffery Bolster has found that between 17 and 22 percent of Philadelphia's seafaring jobs between 1800 and 1820 were occupied by Blacks, at a time when they constituted roughly 5 percent of the

[29] Ira Berlin, "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America," *American Historical Review* 85 (February 1980): 49. In colonial New York, Berlin found, slave "hirelings along with those bondsmen owned by merchants, warehouse keepers, and ship chandlers kept Northern cities moving," with many slaves working in "the maritime trades not only as sailors on coasting vessels, but also in the rope walks, shipyards, and sail factories that supported the colonial maritime industry."

[30] This process is described well in Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community 1720-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 144-52. Nash estimates that "as in the prerevolutionary decades, maritime labor also figured importantly, with probably one-fourth or more of the city's young black males making their living at sea for at least a few years....Alternating work along the docks with shipboard labor, these black sailors...composed about 20 percent of the city's large maritime labor force" in the early nineteenth century, 146.

area's population.)[31] During the antebellum era and the Civil War, a Black boarding house owner, William P. Powell, served as a supplier of African American maritime labor to ship captains and the US Navy. His Colored Sailor's Home in New York, opened in 1839 and sponsored by the American Seamen's Friend Society (a reform organization which created alternatives to exploitative boardinghouses), offered refuge, by its own estimate, to 6,533 African American sailors during a twelve-year period. During the Civil War, a re-opened home, located at No. 2 Cherry Street in New York, served some 500 Black sailors before being ransacked by a White mob on the first day of the July 1863 draft riots.[32]

On the docks of the ports of the Atlantic and Gulf, however, racial conflict was sharpest. By the 1840s, free Black workers along the Philadelphia waterfront competed with Irish immigrants, leading one contemporary to observe that "there may be and undoubtedly is, a direct competition" between African Americans and the Irish: "The wharves and new buildings attest to this, in the person of our stevedores and hod carriers as does all places of labor; and when a few years ago we saw none but blacks, we now see nothing but Irish."[33] During the Civil War, racial violence erupted on the docks of New York. Irish longshoremen (who by then dominated dock work in New York) demanded that "the colored people must and shall be driven to other parts of industry, and that the work upon the docks...shall be attended to solely and absolutely by members of the 'Longshoremen's Association,' and such white laborers as they see fit to permit upon the premises." In the bloody rioting of July 1863, not only did Whites patrol the waterfronts of Manhattan, but also they burned the city's Colored Orphan Asylum and numerous Black tenements and attacked and killed numerous Black New Yorkers in an orgy of violence that lasted for three days.[34]

Waterfronts saw a mix of African and African American slaves and immigrants from Europe perform the crucial work of loading, unloading, and transporting goods in the pre-Civil War South. In New Orleans, enslaved and free Blacks competed for work with Irish and German immigrants by the 1840s and 1850s, with the latter coming to dominate sectors such as cotton screwing (involving the careful, tight packing of cotton bales with heavy jackscrews in the holds of ships) and cotton yard work (the storage and compressing of cotton bales). The longshore labor force of the postbellum era retained—and even increased—its ethnic and racial heterogeneity. In New Orleans, African Americans and Whites both labored along the docks of the Mississippi River, although one group or the other dominated certain jobs. While general longshore work and cotton yard work was divided roughly equally between Blacks and Whites in the late nineteenth century, Whites dominated the skilled and better-paid category of cotton screwing, while Blacks filled the ranks of teamsters and loaders, round freight teamsters, and

[31] W. Jeffrey Bolster, "'To Feel Like a Man: Black Seamen in the Northern States, 1800-1860," *Journal of American History* 76, no. 4 (March 1990): 1173-1199.

[32] James Barker Farr, Black Odyssey: The Seafaring Traditions of Afro-Americans (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 134-35, 225, 236-38; Martha S. Putney, Black Sailors: Afro-American Merchant Seamen and Whalemen Prior to the Civil War (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1987).

[33] Quoted in Bruce Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 157. Testimony from contemporary blacks sustains this assessment. In the late 1830s, a black paper noted that blacks "are now almost displaced as stevedores." Quoted in Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 253.

[34] The quote, and the best account of the riot, is found in Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 27-28; 117-118.

Mississippi River roustabouts. In Mobile, a very different segmented employment structure shaped the racial character of dock work. For example, skilled White workers occupied the top of Mobile's occupational hierarchy, loading timber from lighters in the river onto ships, while Black workers loaded lumber on the docks and performed all of the port's coastwise work (earning roughly half the wages of Whites).[35] In early twentieth century New York, investigator Charles Barnes reported that longshoremen "are of many races, of many nations," including Irish, Italians, Poles, African Americans, Russian Jews, Greeks, and French Canadians. At the same time, one observer noted that the "stevedores of Baltimore are of many nationalities," including the Irish, Poles, Germans, and African Americans.[36]

[35] Testimony of John B. Waterman, Manager for Elder-Demster Steamship Company in Mobile, in Minutes of Investigation Held in the City of Mobile, Alabama, Saturday, February 8th, 1908, in Gilmore Papers, Special Collections, Tulane University.

[36] Barnes, *The Longshoremen*, 4; Charles G. Girelius, "A Baltimore Strike and What it Brought," *The Survey*, 3 August 1912. John R. Commons was perhaps the first to study the men who worked along the shore. In his 1905 article "The Longshoremen of the Great Lakes," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (November 1905), Commons reconstructed the hiring patterns of ore shovelers and lumber unloaders, emphasizing both the ethnic diversity and the rise of union locals of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA). Ten years later, Charles Barnes' *The Longshoremen* became the first full-length study of these workers. The director of the New York State Public Employment Bureau, Barnes was concerned not only with documenting the conditions of longshore labor but reforming its harsher qualities in an effort to relieve "distress and dislocation." His findings constituted an indictment of the conditions of labor—particularly what he called the "evils of casual work," which encouraged "irregular habits and drinking"—and a call for reform—namely protective legislation and the "de-casualization" of labor modeled on European examples (v, 170). In the decades following Commons's article and Barnes's book, little scholarship on longshore labor appeared. In 1955, Charles P. Larrowe published his *Shape-Up and Hiring Hall: A Comparison of Hiring Methods and Labor Relations on the New York and Seattle Waterfronts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), a comparative study of employment practices and hiring methods on the docks of Seattle and New York (by far the nation's largest port). Maud Russell's *Men Along the Shore: The I. L. A. and its History* (New York: Brussell & Brussell, 1966) was a popular and sketchy history of the International Longshoremen's Association. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, longshore workers began to receive detailed scholarly attention by the practitioners of the new labor history. See Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*; Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism 1892-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988). In addition, information on New Orleans waterfront unionism can be found in: Joy Jackson, *New Orleans in the Gilded Age: Politics and Urban Progress 1880-1896* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969); Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, *The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement* (New York: Atheneum, 1969); David Paul Bennetts, "Black and White Workers: New Orleans 1880-1900" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1972).



Longshoremen's strike, New York, NY, c. 1912 *(LOC P&P, Bain)*

Longshore Unions

Waterfront trade unionism's roots are found in workers' benevolent societies, which attended to members' needs for sick and death benefits in the early nineteenth century. Irregular work, excessive competition for available jobs, low wages, and poor conditions gave rise to intermittent labor activism on the part of local associations. As early as 1825, New York longshoremen engaged in a strike for higher wages by tying up nearly all ships in port, as workers flocked to join the "general combination."[37] On the West Coast, an 1851 strike was followed two years later by the formation of the Riggers' and Stevedores' Union Association in San Francisco. Along the South Atlantic coast, the all-black Longshoremen's Protective Union Association of Charleston, South Carolina, emerged in 1867, while along the Gulf Coast, Galveston's Longshoremen's Benevolent Association, that city's first Black trade union, was founded in 1870. That same year, lumber handlers in Bay City and Saginaw, Michigan, formed their own locals.[38] Local associations of dockers appeared in most port cities in the nineteenth century, with varying degrees of longevity and success in protecting members, securing employment, improving conditions, and raising wages.

[37] Albion, The Rise of New York Port, 223-24.

[38] Lester Rubin, William S. Swift, and Herbert R. Northrup, Negro Employment in the Maritime Industries: A Study of Racial Policies in the Shipbuilding, Longshore, and Offshore Maritime Industries (Philadelphia: Industrial Research Unit, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, 1974), 15-16; Charles P. Larrowe, Maritime Labor Relations on the Great Lakes (East Lansing: Labor and Industrial Relations Center, Michigan State University, 1959), 15.

But it was not until the end of the century that a national body emerged with the goal of uniting disparate longshore locals. In 1892, representatives of some ten lumber handlers' unions on the Great Lakes met in Detroit to found a National Longshoremen's Association of the United States; the new body's name was changed to the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) in 1895. The ILA claimed 40,000 members in about 250 locals by the turn of the century. The ILA's power proved to be geographically uneven, and its influence waxed and waned over time. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the ILA was strongest on the Great Lakes and in some southern ports; its influence in the nation's largest port, New York, proved elusive. However, the World War I years afforded new opportunities as federal involvement in labor-management relations produced a mediation body—the National Adjustment Commission—which granted ILA representatives a degree of power and encouraged employers to bargain peacefully with their workers to avoid costly disputes that might harm the American war effort. But the end of the war brought an end to the peaceful adjudication of disputes. Workers seeking higher wages to match the escalating cost of living clashed with employers who sought to roll back workers' wartime gains. When the government sided with employers, numerous ILA locals on the Pacific, Gulf, and Atlantic coasts were destroyed, and the ILA's influence was diminished. Tainted by corruption, the ILA earned a reputation for conservatism and was challenged by a new generation of militant unionists in the 1930s. By the 1960s, new technologies—especially the advent of containerization—reduced the need for unskilled cargo loaders and unloaders.[39]

The history of longshoremen in the postbellum South follows a different path from that of northern dock workers. If both regions witnessed bloody racial clashes, certain areas along the Gulf developed a record of interracial collaboration and even solidarity. The example of labor along the Mississippi River waterfront of New Orleans illustrates the persistence of racial inequality as well as new forms of cooperation across racial lines.

Following the overthrow of Reconstruction in Louisiana and the ending of the 1870s depression, waterfront unionism expanded. By the early 1880s, locals of White longshoremen, cotton screwmen, and cotton yardmen and locals of Black longshoremen, screwmen, yardmen, teamsters and loaders, and round freight handlers had emerged. Unionism on the Crescent City docks—like that on all waterfronts in the American South—followed strict racial lines. Biracial unionism involved the creation of all-black and all-white locals, even in the same trade. The achievement of dock workers in the 1880s was that they managed to form an alliance that encouraged both Blacks and Whites and, in some cases, workers from different waterfront crafts, to work together.

The emergence of the Cotton Men's Executive Council in December 1880 represented a turning point in both waterfront labor relations and southern race relations. The Council, composed of unions representing roughly 13,000 men, was a "solid organization of the labor element embracing every class employed in handling the staple from the time of its reception until it is stored in the ship's hold," as one local newspaper said. Over the course of the 1880s, the Council presided over a shift in power from employers to workers on the docks. In essence, the largest levee unions "wrested control of the labor supply from their employers, implemented complex

[39] John R. Commons, "The Longshoremen of the Great Lakes;" Maud Russell, *Men along the Shore: The I.L.A. and its History*, 65.

conference rules defining the conditions of their labor, and received what were probably the highest longshore wages in the country."[40] Such accomplishments were possible because of several factors. First, a Democratic party machine dependent upon White labor's votes adopted a hands-off approach to labor conflicts, refusing to support employers' efforts to break strikes and depriving them of an important weapon in the usual arsenal against labor. Second, and more important, autonomous Black trade unions emerged out of the city's Black social network to offer members protection against both White employers and employees, making it difficult for White labor to exclude African Americans from the labor market and making it necessary for White labor to enter into collaborative arrangements with African Americans instead. The Black cotton screwmen, whose hall on Burgundy Street between St. Anthony and Bagatelle was constructed in 1889, and Longshoremen's Protective Union and Benevolent Association, which met in Longshoremen's Hall on Perdido Street, were pillars of the African American community. Well after the final collapse of the biracial alliance in 1923, General Longshore Workers, Local Union 1419 operated what one Black monthly called an "imposing and stately labor temple"—located at 518 S. Rampart Street—symbolizing the powerful role of black labor in the "mighty longshoremen's union of the United States."[41]

The construction of a biracial movement allowed participants to neutralize or "handle," if not eliminate, racial tensions, constituting an arena in which Whites and Blacks could work together. Biracial unions adhered to the norms of segregation—racially distinct locals represented Blacks and Whites—but, when the system functioned well, leaders jointly conducted negotiating sessions with employers, and members adhered to identical work rules and wage rates, ratified contracts, and, when necessary, struck side by side.[42]

The impressive biracial labor solidarity of the Gilded Age did not survive the rising tide of southern White racism and the onset of the century's most severe economic depression yet in 1893. Only two years after the 1892 general strike, the high point of a decade of biracial unionism, the waterfront of the Crescent City witnessed outbreaks of violence by White longshoremen and screwmen against their Black counterparts. In late October 1894, between 150 and 200 armed and masked White men targeted Black screwmen unloading six ships on Front Street; they soon controlled the levee from 2nd to 7th Streets, boarding ships and destroying the tools of Black workers. Months later, in March 1895, hundreds of armed Whites destroyed tools used by Black employees of the West India and Pacific Steamship Company in an attack on the Morris Public Bathhouse, located at the head of St. Andrew Street. Additional fighting occurred opposite the French Market between St. Anne and Dumaine Streets. Bloody rioting in the fall of 1894 and the spring of 1895 ended with the occupation of the waterfront by the state militia, the destruction of what remained of the biracial alliance, the lowering of wages, the elimination of union work rules, and the collapse of union influence. By acting to secure a greater portion of

[40] Arnesen, Waterfront Workers of New Orleans, 74.

[41] "Colored Screwmen. Ceremonies Attending the Laying of the Corner-Stone of their Building," *New Orleans Pelican,* June 8, 1889; "Sepia South's Big Labor Temple," *Color,* 4, No. 1 (February 1948).

[42] Not all waterfront workers participated in the same way in this system. In the 1880s and early 1890s, white cotton screwmen, unlike white longshoremen, refused to share jobs equally with blacks. The strongest and most influential of dock workers, white screwmen had the power to limit the number of black screwmen employed daily to a maximum of 100. Black and white screwmen, then, were part of a biracial system, but it was one that reinforced the dominant position of whites.

available work, White workers destroyed the alliance that had permitted them to secure benefits in the first place.



A Cotton steamer, New Orleans, LA, c. 1906 *(LOC P&P, Detroit)*

That, however, was not the end of the story. Shortly after the turn of the century, waterfront workers in New Orleans reconstructed their inter-trade and biracial movement, re-imposed and extended control over the labor supply and conditions of work, and considerably reduced racial competition and hostility. From its founding in 1901 to its destruction at the hands of the New Orleans Steamship Association in 1923, the Dock and Cotton Council stood out as one of the single most important exceptions to the custom and practice of Jim Crow in the United States. Even the White cotton screwmen—the so-called "aristocrats of the levee" who had restricted African American employment in their trade to a mere twenty gangs a day in the 1880s—accepted the principle of biracialism. They agreed to an "amalgamation" (alliance) with Black counterparts, the sharing of all work equally, and even the integration of work gangs (to prevent employers from pitting Black screwmen against White). Their efforts were resisted at every turn. Strikes in the fall of 1902 and 1903 centered on employers' rejection of the new "half-and-half rule" as a violation of their managerial rights. A renewal of conflict in 1907 again pitted stevedores and shipping agents against the two screwmen's unions. Each time, longshore workers' power remained intact and the biracial coalition remained firm. Only after a series of large-scale strikes in 1919, 1921, and 1923 did the Council, and the biracialism that sustained it, finally collapse. The anti-labor open shop of the port's employers succeeded in putting an end to both union power and amicable waterfront race relations after more than two decades of success.

Several issues stand out in New Orleans waterfront workers' experience in the early twentieth century. First, in contrast to the behavior of craft unions of skilled workers in other sectors of the

city's economy, White dock workers (including the skilled screwmen) abandoned a Whites-only approach and made common cause with African Americans at the point of production. The city's Central Trades and Labor Council, established in 1898, was off limits to African Americans, and most craft union internationals affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL) barred Black members or restricted their membership. The Dock and Cotton Council, and the unions in such trades as cotton screwing, longshoring, and cotton yard work, followed a path at odds with the segregation and exclusion of the dominant labor movement. Second, low wage waterfront workers demonstrated concern with the same issues of "workers' control" of production that motivated skilled craftsmen and industrial workers. Not unlike the "autonomous craftsman" whose functional autonomy, skill, and knowledge enabled him to direct the process of labor with little interference from employers (described so well by David Montgomery),[43] low skilled waterfront workers advanced a vision of their place on the docks that clashed with the vision put forth by stevedores and shipping agents. In the early twentieth century, dock workers insisted that they knew best how to load and unload cargo, declaring that they would take orders not from managers but only from union foremen familiar with the job. Third, the road to dock labor's control over the labor force lay in biracial alliance. Having learned the lesson of racial discord in the 1890s, Whites recognized that their only chance for success lay in putting aside their prejudices and according Blacks an equal place in a waterfront labor movement.

New Orleans was not alone in developing African American unions and biracial union structures to govern race relations on the docks. But the forms that biracial unionism assumed varied from port to port. Galveston, New Orleans' primary commercial rival on the Gulf, witnessed far fewer large-scale labor conflicts than New Orleans, and its biracial unionism generated less cooperation between Blacks and Whites.[44] By the early twentieth century, large and powerful railroad companies placed real limits on labor's influence, dominating the waterfronts of Mobile, Pensacola, and Savannah. In Mobile, a segmented employment structure involved Blacks and Whites laboring in different sectors, handling different products at different rates of pay. Whites occupied the best paying jobs as loaders of timber (from lighters in the river onto ships) and screwers of cotton. African American workers loaded lumber on the docks and performed all of the port's coastwise work, earning about half the wages (about twenty-five cents an hour in the

[43] David Montgomery, "Workers' Control of Machine Production in the 19th Century," in *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 9-47.

[44] On the port of Galveston, see: David G. McComb, *Galveston: A History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986); Bradley Robert Rice, *Progressive Cities: The Commission Government Movement in America, 1901-1920* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 3-18. On longshore labor in Galveston, see: Allen Clayton Taylor, "A History of the Screwmen's Benevolent Association from 1865 to 1924" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1968); James V. Reese, "The Evolution of an Early Texas Union: The Screwmen's Benevolent Association of Galveston, 1866-1891," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (October 1971); Taylor, "A History of the Screwmen's Benevolent Association"; Ruth Allen, *Chapters in the History of Organized Labor in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1941); Lawrence D. Rice, *The Negro in Texas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971); Maud Cuney Hare, *Norris Wright Cuney: A Tribune of the Black People* (New York: Crisis Publishing, 1913); Kenneth Kann, "The Knights of Labor and the Southern Black Worker," *Labor History* 18 (Winter 1977): 56-57; William Joseph Brophy, "The Black Texas, 1900-1950: A Quantitative History" (Ph. D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1974), 157-162; James C. Maroney," The Galveston Longshoremen's Strike of 1920," *East Texas Historical Journal* 16, no. 1 (1978): 34-38.

early twentieth century) of the White timbermen and screwmen.[45] Organized in locals affiliated with the ILA, Blacks and Whites collaborated in biracial arrangements that fell short of the New Orleans model, but remained exceptional by the racial standards of the South. In some places, interracial collaboration survived the strike wave of 1923, when longshoremen, and in some cases, screwmen, struck without success in Gulfport, Biloxi, Mobile, Pensacola, Galveston, and Houston.[46]

[45] Melton McLaurin and Michael Thomason, *Mobile: The Life and Times of a Great Southern City* (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, 1981), 80-81; "Port Facilities: The Port of Mobile, Ala." *Merchant Fleet News*, 1, no. 6 (December 1927): 6; David Ernest Alsobrook, "Alabama's Port City: Mobile During the Progressive Era, 1896-1917" (Ph. D. dissertation, Auburn University, 1983); "The Progress of the Negro Race in Mobile," *Mobile Register 100th Anniversary & 74th Annual Trade Review 1814-1914: The Gateway to Panama* (at Mobile Public Library); C. F. Johnson, "The Colored People of Mobile," *Mobile Register,* 1 September 1900.

[46] Longshore workers in Houston implemented a biracial system shortly after that port opened in 1913. By 1916, black local 872 and white local 896 divided all work and foremen's positions equally "in order that any and all friction, or labor trouble be avoided." In that year, the Mallory Steamship Company, long hostile to organized labor, "paying the lowest possible wage scale...and treating their employees in a most inhuman manner," discharged its white union workers, instead offering to employ members of the black local alongside black non-union men. The black union rejected the deal, and the company locked out both the black and white unions. However, evidence shows that black and white gangs worked side-by-side, at least for other firms, through the 1920s. See "Houston, Texas," *The Longshoreman* (August 10, 1916): 2*;* "Report of J. H. Fricke," *The Longshoreman* (September 1916): 3; "A Brief History of I. L. A. Local 872," AR#8, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington. Ruth Allen notes that in the mid-teens the two locals entered into a 99-year agreement to equally divide all work. Allen, *Chapters in the History of Organized Labor in Texas,* 193-94. Race and labor relations in the East Texas longshore trade are described in the fine autobiography of a retired longshoreman and labor activist: Gilbert Mers, *Working the Waterfront: The Ups and Downs of a Rebel Longshoreman* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988).



Seamen in hiring hall, National Maritime Union, New York, NY, 1941 *(Arthur Rothstein, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

On the Waterfront: Seamen and Longshoremen

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sailors and seamen had many common complaints and consistently had their efforts to impose order on their crafts and improve conditions blocked by powerful employers. Laboring under strict federal laws governing behavior and discipline, they were required to pledge obedience to ships' captains before setting sail (in effect, abandoning personal liberties available to other workers and other American citizens) and were subject to severe punishment for failure to follow orders. (Under federal law, seamen could be imprisoned if convicted of deserting ship.) In the 1897 *Arago* case, the Supreme Court upheld the practice of depriving seamen of wages if they deserted. Although the "merchant seaman is a civilian," Elmo Paul Hohman observed in 1938, "in many respects his life resembles that of a soldier."[47] Living conditions were cramped and often dirty, wages were low, and the hours of work were long. Crowded into tiny living spaces so that ship owners could maximize space for cargo, their quarters on ships were akin to cowsheds, although, according to one physician's report, cattle had it better. When on land, seamen were often forced to stay close to the water in overcrowded boardinghouses that were segregated by race. This system even had a name: the crimping system. In this, shipping masters or boardinghouse owners (crimps) required men to stay at their boardinghouses and eat and drink in their saloons, receiving an advance on seamen's wages. The crimps supplied food, liquor, and prostitutes at high rates such that seamen often became indebted to them. Although the LaFollette Seamen's Act of 1915 provided a

[47] Elmo Paul Hohman, *History of American Merchant Seamen* (Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, 1959), 20 (reprinted from the *International Labour Review* 38, nos. 2 and 3, August and September 1938). In the *Arago* case, the Court also exempted seamen from the 13th Amendment's ban on involuntary servitude.

limited corrective to some abuses—particularly imprisonment for desertion from port—protests against low wages, harsh treatment, and crowded labor markets continued.

The boarding house owners that provided lodging, food, and other services while the seamen were on land also served as agents, hiring seamen on behalf of the ship owners such that they became "both the seamen's debtor and his employer"; their control over the labor force made them powerful players in regulating wages and working conditions. But their control was hardly absolute; ship owners had the ultimate control over their workers. Like other workers in industrial America, seamen constituted an ethnically and racially diverse workforce, and ship owners often used ethnic and racial antagonisms to divide workers in the effort to thwart unionization. For example, they would give jobs that were traditionally the purview of a specific ethnicity to members of other groups in order to create social schisms—a tactic that mine operators employed as well. But the nature of their work introduced seamen to people around the world, and many became more open to different cultures and political ideas as a result.[48]

The nineteenth century witnessed the emergence and collapse of numerous efforts at unionization by seamen. Targeting the crimping system and promoting a twelve-hour day and higher wages, unions failed to take root until the century's end. The Lake Seamen's Union became the nation's "first permanent union of merchant seamen" when it was founded in 1878. In 1895, The International Seamen's Union (ISU), was established under the American Federation of Labor. However, this organization was only open to skilled workers, and their exclusivity limited the union's strength and weakened strikes. On the West Coast, the Marine Firemen, Oilers, and Watertenders Union of the Pacific formed in 1883, the Sailors' Union of the Pacific in 1885, and the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union of the Pacific in 1901. Added to the list of demands, particularly for the International Seamen's Union, was the exclusion of Chinese and Japanese seamen from the maritime labor force. While World War I provided a boon to union membership for seamen (as for longshoremen), the post-war era witnessed the elimination of many gains. Supportive federal officials turned hostile, cooperating with employers to crush a massive strike in 1921, ushering in a twelve-year long era of the open shop. By one estimate, the ISU's membership, which topped at about 100,000 in 1918, fell to just 14,000 in 1929.[49] In the 1930s, longshoremen and ship and dock workers formed the Maritime Workers Industrial Union (MWIU), a left-leaning organization that opposed racial discrimination and worked for higher wages, better working conditions, and fair hiring practices.

Viewing the MWIU as a threat, the ISU often worked to thwart its efforts during the early years of the Depression. In the mid-1930s, seamen worked to push the ISU to become inclusive and adopt a more militant position by forming the Seamen's Defense Committee (SDC), which adopted the MWIU's policy of organizing all workers, regardless of position, race, or nationality, in October 1936. That same year, four hundred ISU members from Baltimore joined an SDC

[48] Linda Ziedman and Eric Hallengren, "Radicalism on the Waterfront: Seamen in the 1930s," in *The Baltimore Book: New Views of Local History*, eds. Elizabeth Fee, et al. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 158, 163, 165.

[49] Betty V. H. Schneider, *Industrial Relations in the West Coast Maritime Industry* (Berkeley: Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, 1958); Joseph P. Goldberg, *The Maritime Story: A Study in Labor-Management Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958); William L. Standard, *Merchant Seamen: A Short History of Their Struggles* (New York: International Publishers, 1947); William S. Swift, "The Negro in the Offshore Maritime Industry," in *Negro Employment in the Maritime Industries.*

strike in support of workers belonging to the Maritime Federation of the Pacific. Meeting at the SDC headquarters at 1702 Eastern Avenue in Baltimore, they voted to use the strike to advance their own demands for the hiring of workers—regardless of race or nationality—at the union halls, an eight hour workday, pay for overtime work, and an end to port work on Saturday afternoons and Sundays; eight hundred workers showed up for picket duty on the first day.

The strike endured despite outbreaks of violence on both sides, but support began to waver as the weeks dragged on. The SDC decided to put pressure on Washington, for the National Labor Relations Board was in the midst of determining the legitimacy of the ISU's contract with ship owners. On January 18, a massive group of seamen from ports spanning the Atlantic and Gulf coasts marched all day and night in the cold and rain from Baltimore to Washington in what became known as the Midnight March of the Baltimore Brigade. When they reached Washington, they were joined by thousands more demonstrators. Delegates met with every major head of the government, even President Roosevelt. This gave them the "moral victory" that the strikers sought and led to the strike's conclusion. The strikers voted to return to work on January 25, ending the 87-day strike. The NLRB gave the seamen a favorable ruling, and during the spring of 1937 the National Maritime Union officially formed, with a constitution stipulating the organization of all seamen, 'without regard to race, creed, and color.'[50]



Striking Seamen of the "Baltimore Brigade" picket Commerce Department, Washington, DC, January 18, 1937 *(LOC P&P, Harris & Ewing collection)*

[50] Ziedman and Hallengren, "Radicalism on the Waterfront: Seamen in the 1930s," 167, 169-70, 172.

Drives to organize longshoremen in port cities along the East Coast also developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Work as a longshoreman was difficult at best and literally back breaking at worst. Considered an unskilled position, the primary work requirements were "hard muscle and a strong back." A lack of safety regulations, even after unionization, made the work dangerous as well. Longshoremen also suffered from unpredictable employment—during busy times they could work over twenty-four hours straight unloading cargo, whereas during slack periods they could wait for days in between jobs. Poor working conditions and low wages spurred longshoremen to launch periodic efforts at unionization throughout the nineteenth century. The Knights of Labor launched perhaps the first successful effort, but that success did not last long. In Philadelphia, the strongest effort for longshore unionization was the strike of 1913. During this period the IWW and the ILA battled to win the allegiance of longshoremen; in Philadelphia, the IWW won the battle—a success that historian Lisa McGirr attributes to their stance on forming interracial unions rather than racially separate locals, which had been the ILA's policy. After winning the two-week long strike, in which they secured higher wages, a ten-hour workday, time-and-a-half for overtime work, and double-time for work performed on Sundays and holidays, the Philadelphia longshoremen resumed their jobs as card-carrying members of the IWW Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union Local 8. Operating from its headquarters on the second floor of 121 Catherine Street in south Philadelphia, Local 8 became "the second largest IWW local in the post war period and went down in history as one of the Wobblies' last outposts in the major ports of the U.S.," according to McGirr.[51]

Besides the success of this strike and the union's relative durability, the most significant aspect of Local 8 was its remarkable diversity—southern African Americans who participated in the Great Migration to northern cities, along with immigrants from Eastern European countries such as Lithuania and Poland, as well as Belgium and the West Indies, joined forces to create one of the strongest interracial unions in American labor history. The IWW's strong stance on interracial solidarity made them particularly attractive to the many African American longshoremen working on the docks of Philadelphia. McGirr explains, "The IWW's non-discrimination policies enabled black workers to attain a voice unheard of in industrial affairs of the day and explain the Local's allegiance to the IWW" even though most members did not ascribe to the IWW's brand of labor radicalism. One of the key IWW organizers of dock workers was Ben Fletcher, a Philadelphia native who worked organizing IWW locals in port cities along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts. He became one of the strongest and most influential leaders of the Philadelphia local when he returned to his home city in 1912.[52] However, after WWI, members of Local 8 began to clash with IWW leadership, and these conflicts led to the local's termination as an IWW affiliate in 1923. Although members struggled to sustain the now independent union, they lost that battle in 1926, and the remaining members voted to affiliate with the ILA. Yet, even though Local 8 had folded, its legacy of interracial solidarity continued, and the newly-formed ILA Local 1291 mandated that leadership be racially integrated in the union by-laws.[53]

[51] Lisa McGirr, "Black and White Longshoremen in the IWW: A History of the Philadelphia Marine Transport Workers Industrial Union Local 8," *Labor History* 36 (1995): 377, 382-84.

[52] McGirr, "Black and White Longshoremen in the IWW," 377-78, 380, 389. In 1917, when the federal government began to crack down on political dissent, an effort that focused on the IWW, Fletcher became the only African American Wobbly arrested for violating the Espionage Act and received a ten-year prison sentence.

[53] McGirr, "Black and White Longshoremen in the IWW," 380, 384, 389-90, 401.

Perhaps the region known for the most militant longshoremen activities was along the West Coast, particularly in the northern half. The most significant breakthrough in union recognition, wage increases, and improved working conditions for longshoremen came during the pro-labor era of the New Deal. At the start of the 1930s, San Francisco maritime workers were a defeated lot. "Virtually everyone regarded the seamen's conditions of life and work as deplorable," historian Bruce Nelson observed.[54] The influence and power of the International Seamen's Union (ISU) and the ILA had been eliminated in the titanic post-World War I labor clashes with ship owners and contracting stevedores. The open shop, crowded labor markets combined with powerful employers to produce low wages, harsh conditions, company unions, and powerless AFL unions.

As with the seamen in the MWIU, all that changed with the coming of the New Deal. San Francisco dock workers drew inspiration from the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933. They repudiated the "blue book" company unionism of the past decade and instead turned to the ILA, breathing life into the all-but-dead ILA locals. While leftists, especially Communists, offered inspiration and needed skills, maritime workers manifested their own "mood of syndicalism," Nelson argues, which grew upon thriving remnants of an earlier Wobbly subculture. This mood, or subculture, had several sources. First, it rested upon maritime workers' worldliness. As worldwide travelers, seamen (themselves oppressed) witnessed firsthand injustice in ports around the world, heightening a politicized international perspective. Second, as men who lived life on society's fringes, they had little access to such stable institutions as the family or church. Inclined toward radicalism and inspired by the New Deal and by militant leftists, West Cost maritime workers took matters in their own hands in 1934.

The "Pentecostal Era" began with the General Strike in San Francisco in 1934, one of the most important events of the decade. In defiance of top ILA and AFL officials, as many as 12,000 longshore workers on the West Coast took on employers, the company union, armed vigilantes, and city and state governments. The climax occurred on July 5, the fifty-eighth day of the strike, known as "Bloody Thursday." Police attacked strikers with tear gas, pushed them back toward the strike's headquarters near Mission and Steuart Streets, and fired into a crowd of picketers, killing two men. Days later, protests against the killings brought out 10,000 strike sympathizers in a mass funeral march that extended down Market Street from the Embarcadero to Valencia. In mid-July, the "laboring population" of San Francisco "laid down its tools in a General Strike," in participant Mike Quin's words. The four-day protest involved some 127,000 workers.[55]

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[54] Bruce Nelson's award-winning 1988 *Workers on the Waterfront* chronicles the struggles of West Coast maritime workers in the 1930s. Taking exception to one tendency within labor historiography that emphasizes the "narrow, episodic character of worker militancy" in the 1930s and the "primacy of a deeply rooted social inertia beneath the turbulent surface of events" in that decade, Nelson insists that the study of "insurgent activity and consciousness of maritime workers" during the depression provides a very different picture of labor activism in that decade. Not only were the 1930s not the "not so 'turbulent years'", as historian Melvyn Dubofsky once called them, but they gave rise to a militant unionism that combined "porkchops" and politics and resembled a "constant state of guerilla warfare." For West Coast maritime labor, the 1930s were a "Pentecostal era." Bruce Nelson, *Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 1, 18.

[55] Mike Quin, *The Big Strike* (New York: International Publishers, 1979), 3. Nelson identifies five crucial threads that accounted for the "Big Strike's dynamism": the strikers' "militancy, steadfastness, and discipline" against a determined, powerful, and violent opponent; a "solidarity that swept aside old craft antagonisms;" a "rank-and-file

Although the strike's settlement represented no clear-cut victory for the strikers, events in its aftermath reshaped labor relations on the waterfront to dock workers' advantage. The rank and file transformed a "premature and inconclusive settlement" into a "virtual revolution in work relations and practices on docks and ships" by resorting to brief work stoppages protesting the pace of work, the presence of scabs in work crews, the weight of sling loads, and the nature of relations between workers and their managers.[56] In the "Syndicalist Renaissance" that followed, longshoremen broke away from the conservative, autocratic, and often corrupt ILA to form a new, militant, and democratic International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), which soon affiliated with the newly-established Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).

Maritime workers' accomplishments were impressive. They made work units 100 percent union, assumed control of hiring through the elimination of the hated shape-up and the creation of union hiring halls, empowered union delegates with authority at the workplace, slowed the pace of work, and engaged in political issues beyond the "point of production." The era had witnessed the emergence of a "new order," not only in power relations on the job, but in the men's conceptions of themselves as workers and as citizens. The ILWU is portrayed by Bruce Nelson (and others) as a heroic movement that put an end to long-standing abuses of employers and overturned the weak and accommodationist unionism of the ILA, replacing it with a democratic, and even radical, unionism.

The upheavals of the 1930s had less impact on the waterfronts of the Atlantic coast. In the East, and particularly in New York, the ILA remained a bastion of conservatism and corruption. Under the heavy-handed rule of Joseph ("King Joe") Ryan, the ILA offered no militant challenge to low wages and harsh conditions, refrained from striking (in contrast to the guerrilla warfare on the docks of the West), and established links with organized crime. Sociologist Howard Kimeldorf argues that understanding the historic patterns of occupational recruitment, employers' responses to unionization, and radicals' strategies helps to account for the differences between the two regions and their unions.[57] Eastern dock workers were ethnically heterogeneous and culturally conservative (in many cases under the influence of the Catholic Church). They identified with immigrant neighborhoods and spurned the militant unionism of the Wobblies. On the West Coast, dock workers were often former loggers or seamen; isolated from the dominant culture, they were more cosmopolitan and receptive to syndicalism. Moreover, the unified West Coast employers' all-out opposition to unions fed the syndicalist impulse in the West, while Eastern employers remained divided and tolerated a weak ILA.

Even a progressive union like the ILWU was inconsistent on the issue of racial equality. Pacific coast longshoremen fashioned "one of the most democratic labor unions in the country" whose cornerstone was "rank-and-file control of membership requirements, work rules, administrative structure of the union, and especially the hiring process," in Nancy Quam-Wickham's words. But

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independence and initiative" that included "frequent defiance of AFL norms and officials;" a "willingness to assess the Red presence in the strike independently," and a refusal to succumb to "red-baiting." Nelson, *Workers on the Waterfront*, 128. The 1934 general strike's 50th anniversary was commemorated by the ILWU with murals located at Steuart and Mission.

[56] Nelson, Workers on the Waterfront, 150.

[57] Howard Kimeldorf, Reds or Rackets? The Making of Radical and Conservative Unions on the Waterfront (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

the union's sterling reputation on race relations has been called into question recently. The union's ability to screen applicants for jobs through their union hall dispatcher "vested tremendous power in the local union," Quam-Wickham argues. Yet despite—or perhaps because of—such democratic control, a White majority could exercise its power to discriminate against African American dock workers. During the Second World War, expanded shipping required a larger workforce, and non-whites—Blacks and Mexican Americans in particular—entered the field in growing numbers. Rank-and-file Whites, including the men of the formative "Generation of '34" that had brought about the revolution on the waterfront, were resentful of non-white newcomers and engaged in "slowdowns and work stoppages" to resist the "entry or promotion of minority workers." ILWU leaders denounced racial discrimination, promoted larger civil rights issues, and "supported the hiring of black workers." But in practice, White rank-and-file opposition limited their options, marring the organization's record on race relations.[58]

In the South, New Orleans was a center for waterfront union activity, as Bruce Nelson explains in an important essay entitled "Class and Race in the Crescent City."[59] In the aftermath of what Black social scientists Abram Harris and Sterling Spero called the "disastrous defeat for organized labor" in 1923, conditions deteriorated rapidly. Once again, wage rates fell, union work rules were repealed, race relations grew tense, and employer coercion increased—conditions that only worsened with the onset of the Great Depression. Fresh from their victories on the West Coast, left-wing ILWU organizers turned their attention to the Gulf Coast, and New Orleans in particular, in 1937. The arrival of "courageous and seasoned organizers" gave New Orleans dockers a choice between sticking with the weak, ineffectual ILA locals in the AFL, or turning to the militant, interracial ILWU in the new CIO.

Expecting to gain support quickly from downtrodden African American dock workers, ILWU organizers were in for a rude awakening. The AFL and ILA responded by "pouring men and money" into the contest for the men's allegiance, at the same time that the ILA dispatched its "big time beef squad" to employ "goon tactics" against CIO supporters. Worse still, city officials who had "decided it was time to break the CIO once and for all" unleashed a "systematic reign of police terror." Unlike the more conservative ILA, the ILWU threatened both employers' power and regional racial mores. The "AFL became the lesser of two evils," as employers and the state united to crush the interracial challenge. In the end, the ILWU went down, losing a 1939 National Labor Relations Board election to the ILA. But the ILWU failure cannot be attributed to repression alone. Organizers, in Nelson's opinion, underestimated the attachment of Black dockers to their own ILA locals and overestimated the appeal of interracial unionism. However weak Black locals might have been, they had a long history and retained the allegiance of many members; at the same time, Blacks remained suspicious of Whites—especially out-of-town Whites with a radical agenda. While intimidation was "a major factor among the longshoreman, they seem to have been motivated also by a cautious pragmatism, by a sense of racial solidarity,

[58] Nancy Quam-Wickham, "Who Controls the Hiring Hall? The Struggle for Job Control in the ILWU During World War II," in *The CIO's Left-Led Unions*, ed. Steve Rosswurm (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 48-49, 60, 64. Recently, Bruce Nelson too has adopted this perspective emphasizing the racial exclusion practiced by white dockers on the west coast. See Bruce Nelson, *Divided We Stand: American Workers and the Struggle for Black Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[59] Bruce Nelson, "Class and Race in the Crescent City: The ILWU, from San Francisco to New Orleans," in *The CIO's Left-Led Unions*, 19-45.

and perhaps above all by a distrust of Whites stemming from the legacy of racial competition" for a place on the docks.[60]



East and West shaking hands at laying of last rail of transcontinental railroad, Promontory Summit, UT, May 10, 1869 *(Andrew J. Russell, Golden Spike National Historical Park)*

Railroads in the NIineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

The history of railroads encapsulates much of the myth and reality of American history. For Steward H. Holbrook in 1947, railroads not only "created a dreamworld for boys of my generation," but their "main achievement...was to help enormously to build the United States into a world power and do it well within the span of one man's lifetime.[61] In the recent words of James D. Dilts, "Railroads...epitomized progress, not only in the development and extension of the Western frontier but in the revelation that personal travel and the delivery of freight could be dramatically faster, better, and cheaper."[62]

The occupational structure of the American railroad labor force was complex. The operating trades (also known as the running trades) included those men who operated the locomotive. These men held privileged positions. At the top of the job ladder were conductors and engineers, who commanded the highest wages and exercised authority. In charge of the train's operation,

[60] Nelson, "Class and Race in the Crescent City," 31, 37.
[61] Stewart H. Holbrook, *The Story of American Railroads* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1947), 3.
[62] James D. Dilts, The Great Road: The Building of the Baltimore and Ohio, the Nation's First Railroad, 1828-1853 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 2.

the conductor oversaw both personnel and freight. The conductor, observed railroader turned sociologist W. Fred Cottrell in 1940, acted as a kind of "traveling clerk who combines with his book work sufficient mechanical knowledge."[63] Experienced engineers directed the technical operation of the train, while locomotive firemen, performing what one union official described in 1908 as the "hardest manual labor known to men," requiring "muscle and...the use of his brain,"[64] rode beside him in the engine, feeding coal to the engine's insatiable boiler. Brakemen performed the dangerous work of setting hand brakes (before air brakes became more common in the 1890s) and the coupling of railroad cars with a link and pin. With time, training, experience, and a good economic climate, a fireman could rise to become an engineer, while a brakeman could eventually become a conductor.

Railroad workers in the operating trades began to organize in the 1860s and 1870s. The railroad brotherhoods, as the unions were called, grew out of workers' need to address health, safety, and other concerns. High injury and mortality rates led railroad workers to form benevolent societies that administered death and medical benefit programs for members and their families. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, and the Brotherhood of Railway Conductors struggled with employers for official recognition, improved wages and conditions, and promotions according to seniority. Through World War I, the brotherhoods advocated conservative principles and refrained from entering alliances with other groups of workers, in and out of the industry. In 1916, the brotherhoods' combined power forced the congressional passage of the Adamson Act, which limited the working day to eight hours.[65]

The American railway labor force was segmented along racial and ethnic lines. Engineers and conductors in the operating trades were an ethnically homogeneous lot. In his social profile of the first two generations of railroad labor in the mid-nineteenth century, historian Walter Licht found that native-born Whites, often from rural backgrounds, were clustered at the top as conductors, engineers, firemen, and brakemen; while Irish and German immigrants were concentrated at the bottom, in construction and maintenance-of-way. By the century's end, these "old immigrants" had moved up the scale, replaced in the maintenance-of-way and construction

[63] W. Fred Cottrell, *The Railroader* (Stanford University Press, 1940), 18.

[64] Report, Grand Master, Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, 11th Biennial Convention, Columbus, Ohio (September 1908), 154.

[65] Two excellent studies of railroad labor have appeared over the past decade and a half that focus not so much on labor conflict (although that issue is addressed) as on the workers themselves. Walter Licht's *Working for the Railroad: The Organization of Work in the 19th Century* explores the "work experiences of the first two generations of American railwaymen as a case study of the first American workers in large-scale, corporately owned, bureaucratically managed work organizations." Shelton Stromquist's *A Generation of Boomers: The Pattern of Railroad Labor Conflict in 19th Century America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987) examines the "political economy of railroad labor," focusing on the impact of changes in the supply of labor, the social context of railroad towns, and the evolving character of railroad labor activism and the state's response to it. Other recent works that address aspects of railroad workers' experiences include: James H. Ducker, *Men of the Steel Rails: Workers on the Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe Railroad 1869-1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Jonathan W. McLeod, *Workers and Workplace Dynamics in Reconstruction-Era Atlanta: A Case Study* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, 1989). Stuart Leuthner's *The Railroaders* (New York: Random House, 1983) consists of numerous oral histories with current and retired railroad workers, while Michael G. Matejka and Greg Koos's *Bloomington's C&A Shops: Our Lives Remembered* (Bloomington: McLean County Historical Society, 1988) consists of interviews with shop workers. Also see Colin Davis, *Power at Odds: The 1922 National Railroad Shopmen's Strike* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

departments by "new" immigrants. Throughout the nation, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, founded in 1863 as both a fraternal association and a union, was open only to Whites. Even where the Brotherhood had no contract, no railroad manager was willing to place African Americans in charge of the train's operation; to do so would risk not only the engineers' wrath but also the opposition of White passengers. Similarly, in the North and Northwest, locomotive firemen and brakemen were almost entirely White as well. There, White workers drew a sharp color line (to which employers usually adhered) that barred African Americans or other non-Whites from positions as locomotive firemen and brakemen; Blacks were restricted to the service sector as sleeping car porters, dining car attendants, and station red caps and ushers. In the North, some companies employed Blacks in the position of "porter brakemen," a category that, as its name implies, combined brakemen's tasks with on-board service to passengers.



Construction crew on the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western's Winton Branch, Jessup, MD, 1888 *(Steamtown National Historical Park)*

In the South, a different racial division of labor prevailed. Although the positions of conductor and engineer remained off-limits to African Americans, Black men were no strangers to operating trades. Before and after the Civil War, African Americans worked as firemen and brakemen. By the twentieth century, African Americans made up the majority of firemen, hostlers (who handled engines inside the roundhouse yard or took them from the yard to the station), switchmen, and brakemen on the Gulf Coast lines, as well as some 90 percent of the firemen on the Seaboard Air Line.[66] Between the end of the century and 1930, Blacks outnumbered Whites as locomotive firemen on Georgia's railroads, holding 60 percent or more of such positions. From the 1880s onward, White firemen and brakemen imitated their northern

[66] *Report of the Eight-Hour Commission* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1918); Edward Aaron Gaston, Jr., "A History of the Negro Wage Earner in Georgia, 1890-1940" (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1957), 237-42.

brothers by calling for the reduction or elimination of Blacks in their trades. Relying upon a wide range of tactics—petitioning managers, legislative lobbying, striking, negotiating, and even terrorism—the campaign began to see results in the 1910s. In the aftermath of World War I, contracts were negotiated with employers to drastically reduce the number of Black workers and end most new Black hires.[67]

In the unskilled construction and maintenance-of-way divisions of the industry, non-whites dominated by the mid- and late nineteenth century. African Americans performed much of the unskilled labor on the South's railroads. In the antebellum era, southern railroad systems, which remained small in comparison with those of the North, relied upon slave labor to lay and maintain track. Historian Robert Starobin has concluded that enterprises engaged in internal improvements were so dependent upon slave labor that "virtually all southern railroads, except for a few border-state lines, were built either by slave-employing contractors or by company-owned or hired bondsmen," employing over 20,000 slaves. In Georgia, railroad contractors were the largest employers of unskilled Black labor before and during the Civil War. Upon occasion, railroad companies purchased their own slaves; more often, they found that the demand, price, and availability of slaves for hire made it advantageous financially to rent slaves from owners on an annual basis.[68] In southern West Virginia, the "railroad provided more avenues for slave labor" beyond agriculture in the region. "Its construction provided a new market for slave owners wishing to rent out their human property," Kenneth Noe argues: "Indeed, the completed railroad functioned as a silent monument to the abilities and tenacity of Black laborers who performed most of the line's construction and maintenance. Hired slaves cut wood, graded, broke up stone for ballast, laid track, and cleared snow...Envisioned by whites, it was black Southwest Virginians who made the dream of a mountain railroad a reality."[69] Southern railroad building in the postbellum era depended upon the labor of newly-emancipated African American men, who found wage labor on construction and track crews an attractive alternative to sharecropping on plantations.[70]

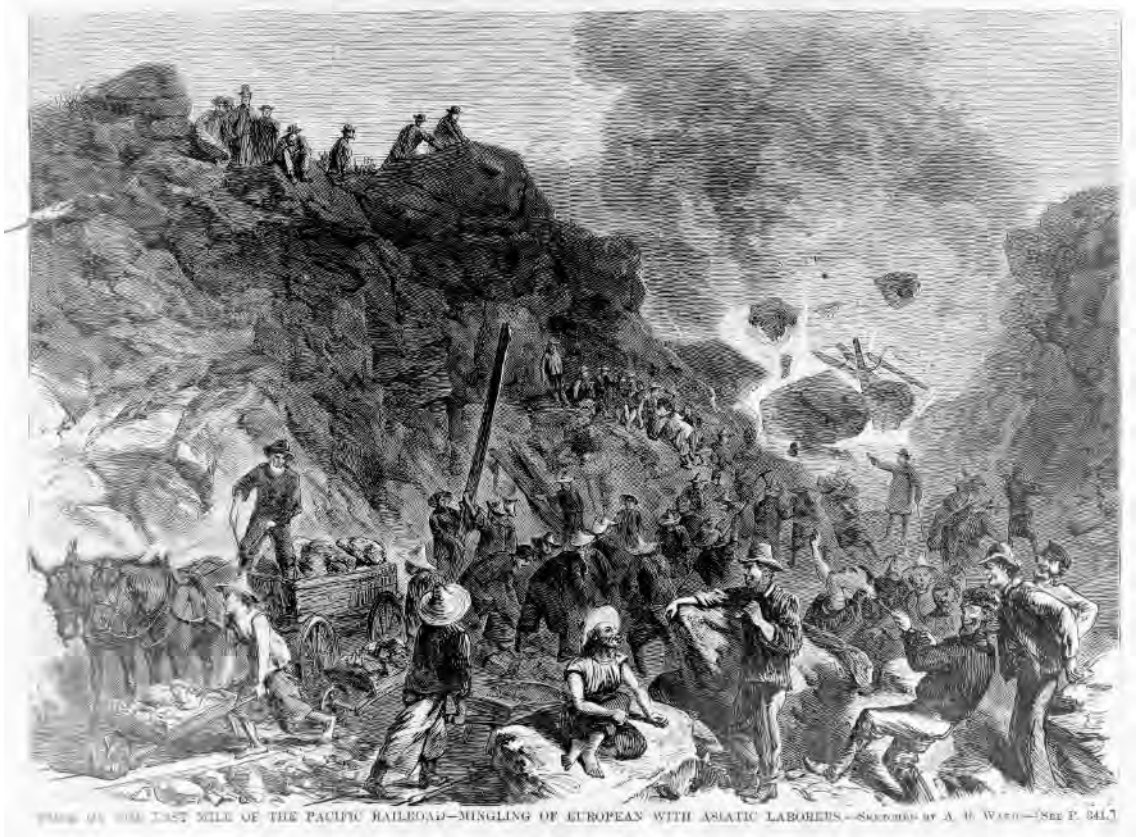
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[67] Eric Arnesen, "'Like Banquo's Ghost, It Will Not Down:' The Race Question and the American Railroad Brotherhoods, 1880-1920," *American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (December 1994).

[68] Robert S. Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 28; Clarence L. Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters & Slaves in Civil War Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 136-42, 164-66, 182. On the use of slaves in the construction of southern railroads, also see: Howard D. Dozier, *A History of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1971), 89-90; Allen W. Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad, 1849-1871, and the Modernization of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Stephen Ray Henson, "Industrial Workers in the Mid Nineteenth-Century South: Atlanta Railwaymen, 1840-1870" (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1982), 109-14. Also see: John F. Stover, *Iron Road to the West: American Railroads in the 1850s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 65, 85, 92; William Cohen, *At Freedom's Edge: Black Mobility and the Southern White Quest for Racial Control, 1861-1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 128; Jonathan W. McLeod, *Workers and Workplace Dynamics in Reconstruction-Era Atlanta*, 28-29, 33-34.

[69] Kenneth W. Noe, Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 82.

[70] William Cohen, At Freedom's Edge, 128; McLeod, Workers and Workplace Dynamics in Reconstruction-Era Atlanta; Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South, 28; Licht, Working for the Railroad, 42, 65-69.



Alfred Waud, "Work on the last mile of the Pacific Railroad—Mingling of European with Asiatic laborers," in Harper's Weekly, May 29, 1869; note Irish and Chinese stereotypes *(LOC P&P)*

Chinese men provided much of the muscle and skill for the construction of the first railroads in the West. In California, Chinese men had worked as miners in the 1850s and early 1860s but rising White opposition and a decline in this extractive industry led to the search for new opportunities.[71] Railroad construction, particularly the building of the transcontinental railroad, provided a short-term answer. The California Central Railroad, connecting Sacramento and Marysville, used fifty Chinese workers in 1858, and, two years later, the San Jose Railway turned to Chinese labor.[72] In 1862, Congress authorized the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific to complete the rail link across the continent, in part, as a Civil War measure designed to "bind the Pacific coast tier of states...more closely to the Union,"[73] in Albro Martin's words. To encourage the project, it provided land grants and funds through bond sales. The race to complete the transcontinental railroad, combined with a shortage of White laborers (who, given an option, preferred mining to railroading), led managers to hire Chinese workers for basic construction in and after 1865. The Central Pacific Railroad initially hired some 50 Chinese immigrants to lay track east of Sacramento. Unable to secure sufficient White labor to blast and handle rock, drive horses, or lay track, the company soon became dependent upon the Chinese, who Central Pacific president Leland Stanford described as "quiet, peaceable, industrious, [and]

[71] Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 62-66.
[72] Jack Chen, *The Chinese in America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 67.
[73] Albro Martin, Railroads Triumphant: The Growth, Rejection, and Rebirth of a Vital American Force (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 281.

economical."[74] By 1867, the Central Pacific had 12,000 Chinese workers—some 90 percent of its work force—on the payroll.[75] In Historian Ronald Takaki's words, the "construction of the Central Pacific Railroad line was a Chinese achievement...The Chinese workers were, in one observer's description, 'a great army laying siege to Nature in her strongest citadel.'"[76]



"China Wall," constructed by Chinese laborers in 1869 to carry the Central Pacific Railway across Donner Pass, CA, 2004 *(Arthur Gibbs Sylvester)*

Conditions of labor were harsh. Cutting a path for railroad tracks across the almost perpendicular cliff along the face of Cape Horn in 1865 involved the lowering of Chinese workmen in baskets. Hanging by ropes, they chiseled the rock face with crowbars and hammers or drilled holes in the rock face and stuffed them with gunpowder, which usually exploded after the workmen had been pulled back up. Inclement weather did not stop work. In the severe winter of 1866, as the Chinese laborers began blasting operations with nitroglycerin for a tunnel at Donner Summit (which ultimately extended 1,695 feet long), they lived and worked in tunnels underneath snowdrifts that exceeded sixty feet. The construction superintendent later told federal investigators, "The snowslides carried away our camps and we lost a good many men in these

[74] Quoted in Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 196-97.

[75] Keith L. Bryant, Jr., "Entering the Global Economy," in *The Oxford History of the American West*, eds. Clyde A. Milner II, Carol A. O'Connor, and Martha A. Sandwiess (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 217; Chen, *The Chinese in America*, 69.

[76] Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 197. The Chinese, David Montgomery writes, "carved a path out of the perpendicular cliffs above the American River by lowering one another in wicker baskets to drill holes, set powder, and fire it off." Montgomery claims, "No other railroad builders ever accomplished feats of labor as spectacular as those of the Chinese" on the Central Pacific. Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 67.

slides; many of them we did not find until the next season."[77] Despite pervasive racist assumptions and an absence of allies, Chinese railroaders in the High Sierras belied White stereotypes of docility in the spring of 1867 by engaging in what David Montgomery describes as "one of the largest-scale strikes of the century." They demanded higher pay and a reduction of hours. (As one of the strikers' leaders was said to have put it, "Eight hours a day good enough for white men, all the same good for Chinamen.") Managers broke the strike by cutting off all supplies of food and turning the work camps into prisons. "Not only this strike," Montgomery concludes, "but also the very existence of the Chinese who had built the railroad, was soon obliterated from the American consciousness." In 1869, the Union Pacific and Central Pacific lines met near Ogden, Utah, at Promontory Summit. No Chinese workers appeared in the famous photograph of the completion of the transcontinental railroad, and the Chinese contribution was ignored in commemorative speeches.[78] Today, at the Soda Springs exit off Interstate 80 East, the remnants of a "Chinese Wall," which originally served as a retaining wall for the railroad across the Sierra Nevada, stand as a reminder of the Chinese role in the construction of the railroad.

Even after the completion of the transcontinental railroad, Chinese workers continued to constitute an important segment of the railroad labor force in California, Arizona, and Texas. The Southern Pacific Coast Railroad, for instance, relied upon Chinese workers to cross the coastal range between Santa Cruz and San Jose, California. By 1880 "Chinese railroad builders dug cuts, laid ballast, drilled tunnels, built trestles, laid track, and risked death," Sandy Lydon writes, "to build almost 100 miles of track" that brought Santa Cruz and Monterey counties "into the industrial age." Wright's Tunnel, which took two-and-a-half years to complete, was the product of Chinese workers' labor. With its completion in 1880, dangerous conditions (including an oil fire in the tunnel) had claimed almost thirty lives.[79]

Racist attitudes against the Chinese continued to permeate railroad operations in the West through the 1880s; in September of 1885 anti-Chinese attitudes exploded during an incident referred to as the Massacre at Rock Springs, Wyoming. At this time, approximately 331 Chinese and 150 White workers were employed in a Union Pacific Railroad mining shaft near the town of Rock Springs. One night, a fistfight between Chinese and White coal miners spurred White workers to organize a meeting at the local Knights of Labor hall in Rock Springs. That afternoon, a group of armed men attacked the Chinese section of town. By that evening White rioters began to set fire to buildings and shot people as they fled, killing twenty-eight Chinese residents and wounding fifteen. Those who managed to escape to the hills were picked up by Union Pacific trains and taken to Evanston, Wyoming, where they again faced angry crowds of Whites. The territorial governor telegraphed President Cleveland for assistance, and a week later the surviving Chinese were brought back to Rock Springs by military escort. Sixteen White miners were arrested but did not face indictment by a grand jury. Railroad officials fired almost one-third of the White miners and reopened the mines again with a mix of White and Chinese labor. Most of the rioters were ethnic Whites—Cornish, Welsh, Irish, English, and Scandinavian immigrants. The mines had employed only White miners until 1875, when the company started

[77] Quoted in Victor G. and Brett De Bary Nee, *Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of An American Chinatown* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 41; Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 197.
[78] De Bary Nee, Longtime Californ', 41-42; Montgomery, The Fall of the House of Labor, 68.
[79] Sandy Lydon, *Chinese Gold: The Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region* (Capitola, California: Capitola Book Company, 1985), 79-111; Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Disorientation and Reorientation: The American Landscape Discovered from the West," *Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (December 1992): 1033-1034.

demanding higher tonnage. The miners refused to capitulate to this increase and the company responded by bringing in Chinese miners for the first time to take the place of the recalcitrant White workers. This action only exacerbated racial tensions—a story all too familiar in American labor history.[80]

Other groups of non-whites worked as section hands and in construction. In the Pacific Northwest, where (along with California) most Japanese immigrants settled, railroad construction/maintenance and sawmills were the two largest employers of Japanese immigrant labor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (Numerically significant Japanese immigration took place over a relatively short period of time, lasting from the 1890s until the 1907 "Gentlemen's Agreement" put an end to it.) Most Japanese immigrants followed the labor path that Chinese immigrants had before them; a lack of understanding of cultural difference led native-born employers to perceive the Japanese and the Chinese as one and the same. This was particularly the case in agricultural and railroad work. In 1906, an estimated 13,000 Japanese men worked as section hands, shop workers, and as construction workers for bridges and buildings across western states. Many were able to find work in this industry via labor contractors. Their proximity to the sites of work helped them to enter the industry (as opposed to other immigrant groups who came in on the East Coast and had to be sent out west for work).

Japanese laborers secured employment largely through Japanese labor contractors, who provided and supervised workers for American companies. In turn, those companies paid contractors a fee and provided workers with only transportation and housing in the form of tents or boarding houses. One of these labor suppliers or "bosses" was Tadashichi Tanaka, a former seaman whose wife operated a brothel in Ogden, Utah. He set up shop in Nampa, Idaho, and furnished workers for the Union Pacific Railroad Company for the line that ran between Huntington and Granger in Wyoming. One of the largest labor contracting companies for railroad work more generally was the Nichibei Kangyo Sha (Japanese American Industrial Corporation). The Oregon Short Line, the Southern Pacific, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy, and the Great Northern all relied upon Japanese contractors to fill their demand for labor at the turn of the century. According to Yuji Ichioka, a leading historian of Japanese immigrants, railroad companies employed roughly 10,000 Japanese workers in the West in 1909. Although initially hired as track workers, some after 1900 managed to advance to better paying positions as "roundhouse laborers, wipers, and coal heavers," according to Yuzo Murayama.[81]

In the American Southwest, Mexican and Mexican-American workers constituted a significant element in the railroad construction and maintenance departments by the early twentieth century. Employment agencies, many of which maintained headquarters in El Paso, on the Texas-Mexico

[80] Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy*, 201-204.

[81] Yuzo Murayama, "Contractors, Collusion, and Competition: Japanese Immigrant Railroad Laborers in the Pacific Northwest, 1898-1911," *Explorations in Economic History* 21, No. 3 (July 1984): 290-305; Yuji Ichioka, "Japanese Immigrant Labor Contractors and the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern Railroad Companies, 1898-1907," *Labor History* 21 (1980): 325-350; Ichioka, "Labor-Contracting System," in Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York: Free Press, 1988), 57-90; Iwata, *Planted in Good Soil: A History Of The Issei In United States Agriculture* (New York: P. Lang, 1992), 120-22. Also see: W. Thomas White, "Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Railroad Work Force: The Case of the Far Northwest, 1883-1918," *Western Historical Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (July 1985): 265-83; William Thomas White, "A History of Railroad Workers in the Pacific Northwest, 1883-1934" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1981).

border, recruited Mexican workers on behalf of US railroad companies. In 1908, Victor S. Clark observed the rapid and large increase in the amount of Mexican labor in the US: "As recently as 1900, immigrant Mexicans were seldom found more than a hundred miles from the border. Now they are working as unskilled laborers and as section hands as far east as Chicago and as far north as Iowa, Wyoming, and San Francisco...[They] are distributed as railway laborers over practically all of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona," as well as "California as far north as Fresno, in southern Nevada, and in Colorado."[82] In the early twentieth century, for example, the Santa Fe Railroad and other companies began recruiting Mexican men in Kansas for seasonal work as section gang laborers. On the company payroll from May to October (working on repair and maintenance crews), perhaps 70 percent of the immigrants "usually returned to Mexico" while 30 percent remained to work in other sectors of the economy (such as the sugar beet industry).[83]

Class conflict on the railroads—especially the major strikes of 1874, 1877, 1885-1886, 1894, 1909, and 1922—involved large numbers of workers, produced social disruption, and commanded national attention. Take the year 1877 as an example. In the fourth year of an economic depression that witnessed wage cut after wage cut, locomotive firemen and brakemen walked off their jobs on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, precipitating the largest and most disruptive strike the nation had seen. The strike began in Martinsburg, West Virginia, involving workers at the B & O Roadhouses and Shop Complex, between Martin and Race Streets. The strike spread to Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Louisville, and St. Louis. By late July, workers on all major railroad lines east of the Mississippi River were on strike. The conflict embraced other groups of workers, such as coal miners, longshoremen, mill hands, and even domestic workers. Strikers clashed with company officials and militiamen in many states. At Camden Station, near Baltimore, a crowd numbering 2,000 engaged in pitched battle with three companies of the Sixth Regiment of the Maryland National Guard. The fighting, which extended from the Centre Market to the corner of Baltimore and St. Paul Streets, resulted in the death of at least ten people. By the time the three days of violence had ended, thirteen were dead and fifty had been wounded. In Pittsburgh, strikers and sympathizers unleashed their anger at the Pennsylvania Railroad by halting all trains, clashing with 1,000 militiamen imported from Philadelphia, and setting fire to freight cars at the Union Depot (between Washington Street and 33rd Street). When the fighting was over, strike sympathizers had burned five hundred freight cars, over one hundred locomotives, and thirty-nine buildings. On July 19, militiamen killed thirty people at the 28th Street rail crossing in the Strip district, near the roundhouse behind

[82] Victor S. Clark, "Mexican Labor in the United States," in Department of Commerce and Labor, *Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor* No. 78 (September 1908), 466, 477.

[83] Robert Oppenheimer, "Acculturation or Assimilation: Mexican Immigrants in Kansas, 1900 to World War II," *Western Historical Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (October 1985): 434-35. On Mexican and Mexican-American railroad workers, see: Michael M. Smith, "Mexicans in Kansas City: The First Generation, 1900-1920," *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies* 2 (1989): 32, 34-36; Daniel T. Simon, "Mexican Repatriation in East Chicago, Indiana," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 2, no. 2 (Summer 1974): 11-12; Paul S. Taylor, "Mexican Labor in the United States: Chicago and the Calumet Region," *University of California Publications in Economics* 7, no. 2 (March 1932): 62-66, 82-86; Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976), 8-12; Michael M. Smith, "Beyond the Borderlands: Mexican Labor in the Central Plains, 1900-1930," *Great Plains Quarterly* 1 (Fall 1981), 240, 243-44; Mario T. Garcia, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). By the late 1920s, Chicago, an important center for track laborers, became the temporary destination of a growing number of Mexican workers, who secured jobs in a central employment district on Madison Street. Taylor, "Mexican Labor in the United States," 63-65.

Pennsylvania Station. Farther west, in Chicago, the strike began at the Michigan Central freight yards and spread rapidly. Eight thousand gathered at the roundhouse of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad, before being dispersed by troops in an attack that killed three.[84] By the time the strikes across the nation had been crushed at the hands of company guards, city police, and even the federal government, clashes were being referred to as "the insurrection."[85]

During the mid-1880s, the Knights of Labor swept tens of thousands of railway workers (officially, engineers, conductors, and firemen were separately organized) into its ranks as its locals challenged some of the most powerful "robber barons" in the country. Another strike in 1885 began in Sedalia, Missouri, following wage cuts, increased hours, and the firing of members of the Knights. Knights' assemblies representing shop workers successfully took on Jay Gould's Southwest rail system (including the Wabash; Missouri Pacific; and Missouri, Kansas, and Texas railroads). In the end, they forced the robber baron to restore wages, bargain with the Knights, reinstate discharged union activists, and promise no further discrimination against union members.[86]

The impact of the Knights' victory was tremendous. Tens of thousands of workers in diverse industries and trades enrolled in the Order. The following year, however, a better-prepared Gould renewed the battle with different results. In Arkansas, fifteen masked strike sympathizers commandeered and sidetracked a St. Louis, Iron Mountain, and Southern Railroad train transporting perishable freight at the railroad's Fort Smith crossing, while others removed set screws from trains at the Baring Cross roundhouse, effectively removing them from operation. In East St. Louis, strikers engaged in mass demonstrations at freight houses and railroad yards. Violence erupted on April 9 when between 1,000 and 1,500 strikers gathered on the east side of the city's bridge near the tracks of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad to monitor strikebreaking activities and to jeer strikebreakers. Charging at the crowd, fifteen, armed deputy sheriffs, "losing entire control over themselves, fired promiscuously right and left," in the words of the Louisville Commercial: "The crowd broke and ran in all directions uttering maledictions as they retreated. Curses deep and loud, mingled with the groans of the wounded and dying." The pursuing deputies fired as many as two hundred shots at the fleeing crowd, hitting at least three. "The holocaust of blood" continued with a "brief and bloody struggle on the narrow trestle bridge over the Kahokia" before the deputies fled. In contrast to their 1885 victory, the Knights went down to bitter defeat in 1886.[87]

The Pullman strike/boycott of 1894 was one of the largest, most dramatic, and significant labor conflicts of the late nineteenth century. The workers of the Pullman Palace Car Company—which constructed the luxurious Pullman sleeping cars—worked and lived in the "model"

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[84] Samuel Yellen, *American Labor Struggles 1877-1934* (New York: Monad Press, 1974), 14, 16-18, 28.

[85] Robert V. Bruce, *1877: Year of Violence* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970) and Philip S. Foner, *The Great Labor Uprising of 1877* (New York: Monad Press, 1977). For Foner in particular, the strike's participants consisted of crowds, not mobs (as earlier critics called them), and their actions "were not mindless riots, but rather reflections of the economic, political, and social grievances, needs, and aspirations of the...participants." Foner, *The Great Labor Uprising of 1877*, 10-11.

[86] Michael J. Cassity, "Modernization and Social Crisis: The Knights of Labor and a Midwest Community, 1885-1886," *Journal of American History* 66, no. 1 (June 1979): 41-61.

[87] Ralph V. Turner and William Warren Rogers, "Arkansas Labor in Revolt: Little Rock and the Great Southwestern Strike," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 24, no. 12 (Spring 1965): 29-46; "Bloodshed: The Result of the Labor Riots," *Louisville Commercial*, April 10, 1886.

community of Pullman, Illinois (Pullman Historic District, NHL, 1970), living under the stern paternalism of their anti-union employer George Pullman. In the midst of economic depression, wage cuts, and the firing of union activists, however, employees organized and turned to the American Railway Union (ARU) for assistance. The ARU had been formed the previous year, when some fifty railroad delegates inaugurated the organization as an industrial union, embracing workers in almost all railroad crafts, at a meeting in Chicago's Ulrich's Hall on June 20, 1893. Led by a former official of the conservative Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, Eugene V. Debs, the more inclusive and radical ARU had a membership of about 150,000 railroad workers by 1894.[88] In response to Pullman workers' pleas for help, the ARU voted to boycott the company by refusing to work on any train that carried a Pullman car.[89] In the strike and boycott that followed, the ARU went against the industry's powerful General Managers' Association (representing some twenty-four rail lines), much of the nation's mainstream press, and state and federal governments. Thousands of armed deputies and federal troops battled strikers, while the courts issued injunction after injunction, making it legally impossible for strike leaders to continue the strike. Debs and other leaders were arrested, convicted, and sentenced to prison for defiance of court orders. When it was over, Pullman Palace Car workers had lost their battle, the ARU was destroyed, and Eugene Debs was on the road to becoming a socialist.

Not all railroad labor activism centered on union recognition, wages, or working conditions. The racial composition of the labor force proved to be a motivating factor in the determination of White union strategy. Until the 1950s and 1960s, membership of the several railroad brotherhoods was all White, as constitutional bars and membership rituals kept out African Americans and other non-whites. White trade unionists relied upon tactics including strikes, political lobbying, and in some cases, racial terrorism, to reduce the number of—or eliminate entirely—African American railroaders in the operating service. For example, members of the all-white Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen struck against the Georgia railroad (leased by the anti-union Louisville & Nashville railroad) in 1909 when the superintendent of the Atlanta Terminal yards removed ten White workers, replacing them with ten Black workers at a lower cost. During the three-week long strike, Whites denounced the very presence of African Americans on board locomotive engines, and White strikers and

[88] Debs had been a leader in the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen before his defection; his home in Terre Haute, Indiana, near Indiana State University, today stands as a museum exploring Deb's life and vision.

[89] On the Pullman strike, see Stromquist, *A Generation of Boomers*; Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982). Also see: William Carwardine, *The Pullman Strike* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1984); Almont Lindsey, *The Pullman Strike: The Story of a Unique Experiment and of a Great Labor Upheaval* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942); Stanley Buder, *Pullman: An Experiment in Industrial Order and Community Planning, 1880-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Ray Ginger, *Eugene V. Debs: The Making of an American Radical* (New York: Macmillan/Collies, 1962). Salvatore's study in particular situates Debs's evolving radicalism within the larger context of American working-class republican ideology. According to Salvatore, Debs viewed the "resuscitation of American political culture" as requiring a "defense of the independent citizen-producer" in the larger battle "to humanize industrial capitalist society." Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs*, 146. New studies and interpretations of the Pullman strike also appeared on the event's 100th anniversary. Almost 200 scholars and trade unionists gathered at Indiana State University in Terre Haute (where Debs grew up and continued to live) in September 1994 to reexamine the strike and the larger crisis of the 1890s.

sympathizers attacked Black workers and White strikebreakers along the Georgia Railroad's route.

White firemen were unsuccessful in removing African Americans in 1909, but they later renewed attacks on African American workers in the operating trades with more success.[90] In 1911, White firemen on the Queen and Crescent railroad struck over the race issue in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio. At Kings Mountain, Kentucky—at the entrance of one of the railroad's longest tunnels—armed mountaineers stopped freight trains. A group of twenty-five Whites attacked several Black firemen, driving one from the train and shooting several others. In January 1919, White switchmen struck in the rail yards of Memphis, Tennessee, demanding the dismissal of their Black counterparts.[91] Following World War I, railroad companies and the federal government proved more responsive to White unionists' demands for limitations on Black railroaders. Until the 1940s and 1950s, new Black hires dropped in response to White union pressure.

African American trade unionism on the railroads took root in the service sector, where African Americans faced little competition from Whites. Pullman porters, who captured popular attention over the years, put the issue of African American trade unionism on the map of American labor and industrial relations in the 1920s and 1930s. Founded in 1925, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) was led for over four decades by the charismatic Black radical, A. Philip Randolph.[92] The union contended not only with opposition from a staunchly anti-union corporation—which employed spies, a company union, and the blacklist to slow the Brotherhood's progress—but initially with opposition from Black elites and the Black press as well. The Pullman Company did offer jobs to Black workers in an industry known for its pronounced racism, and it did offer advertising and other patronage to Black editors and institutions. The battle for recognition, then, was an uphill one from the start. From 1925 to 1937, the BSCP suffered setback after setback.

[90] John Michael Matthews, "The Georgia 'Race Strike' of 1909," *The Journal of Southern History* 40, no. 4 (November 1974): 613-630; Hugh B. Hammett, "Labor and Race: The Georgia Railroad Strike of 1909," *Labor History* 16 (Fall 1975): 470-484. See also Arnesen "'Like Banquo's Ghost, It Will Not Down;'" Andrew Neather, "Popular Republicanism, Americanism, and the Roots of Anti-Communism, 1890-1892" (Ph. D. dissertation, Duke University, 1994); also see Paul Michel Taillon, "Culture, Politics, and the Making of the Railroad Brotherhoods, 1863-1916" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1997).

[91] "Mountain Men to Aid Strikers Halt 3 Trains," *Cleveland Press*, March 13, 1911; "Negro Fireman is Chased From Cab by Howling Mob," *Lexington Herald*, March 12, 1911.

[92] For more detailed information on the formation and early years of the BSCP, see the chapter on service and white-collar labor in this study.



Asa Philip Randolph (center front in dark coat) with railroad employees, and group of Black men and women, Washington, DC, n.d. *(The Scurlock Studio, Washington, DC., LOC P&P)*

The BSCP drew upon the energies and resources of its membership and those of the larger African American community. By the 1930s, Randolph and his fellow organizers had secured the support of a wide range of allies, including the AFL and numerous Black editors and Black ministers. Indeed, during the Great Depression and beyond, the Brotherhood held many of its organizing and business meetings in Black churches. When it sponsored a national labor conference in 1930, attended by White AFL officials, delegates of the Brotherhood, and Black political and social leaders, it chose the Metropolitan Community Church on Chicago's South Side to hold its public mass meeting. The Central Baptist Church of Pittsburgh was the location of its 1934 "monster mass meeting" to call for the adoption of amendments to the Railway Labor Act. In Kansas City, Missouri, the Paseo Baptist Church (located at 2501 Paseo) was the site of a BSCP convention in 1937, while the Bethel AME church of Detroit hosted the second annual Michigan Economic and Industrial Conference, which Randolph addressed. In Chicago, porters held numerous meetings at Du Sable High School, on State Street at 49th. In June 1936, some 2,000 porters, families, and friends heard BSCP vice-president Milton P. Webster recount the history of the porters' fight to unionize and explain the union's policy of fighting "race prejudice in the AFL from within," following AFL president William Green's presentation to the BSCP of its international charter.[93] Two years later, the Brotherhood held its twelfth anniversary celebration in the city's Church of the Good Shepherd located at 5700 Prairie Avenue.

[93] "Pullman Porters' Union Invades City; Plans are Made for Unity," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 22, 1934; "Local Meet is Addressed by Randolph," *Detroit Tribune*, August 14, 1937; "1st Race International Labor Unit is Chartered," *Chicago Defender*, June 13, 1936. In Chicago, the midwest headquarters for the union was located at 4231 South Michigan; in New York, the union's headquarters were located at 207 W. 140th Street in 1934; by the following year, it had moved to 105 West 136th Street; by 1940, it was located at 217 West 125th Street. On the

The union finally won its long battle for recognition. Benefiting from its organizers' skill, rank-and-file commitment, and a changed political environment (in which New Deal legislation promised workers the right to elect a bargaining agent of their own choosing), the union was victorious in its 1935 representation election. Two years later, the Pullman Company signed its first contract with the Black union. Salaries went up, hours went down, job security improved, and grievance procedures, to a degree, protected workers' rights. The NAACP's *Crisis* concluded, "As important as is this lucrative contract as a labor victory to the Pullman porters, it is even more important to the Negro race as a whole, from the point of view of the Negro's up-hill climb for respect, recognition and influence, and economic advance."[94] From its inception to the 1960s, the BSCP also functioned as a civil rights organization, taking action in both local communities and in national politics. Without question, the BSCP had emerged as the premier union of Black workers in the nation and retains historical attention even today.[95]

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and numerous other black railroad unions, also see Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) and Beth Tompkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925-1945* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[94] G. James Fleming, "Pullman Porters Win Pot of Gold," *Crisis* 44, no. 11 (November 1937): 333.

[95] Although we have no full-scale modern treatment of the BSCP's entire history, a number of important works address aspects of their struggle for recognition, dignity, and workplace and civil rights. Brailsford R. Brazeal's 1946 study of the union, *The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters: Its Origin and Development* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946) remains a valuable classic, while William H. Harris's 1977 book, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925-37* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977) solidly explores the BSCP's early years. An excellent article on obstacles to the porters' organizing efforts is Greg Leroy, "The Founding Heart of A. Philip Randolph's Union: Milton P. Webster and Chicago's Pullman Porters Organize, 1925-1937," *Labor's Heritage* 3, no. 3 (July 1991). Jervis Anderson's *A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972) focuses more on the BSCP's leader than it does on the BSCP itself but is an excellent biography that places Randolph in a detailed context of politics and protest. Paula F. Pfeffer's *A. Philip Randolph, Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990) is an important study of Randolph's and the BSCP's involvement in political and social movements of the 1940s and beyond. Jack Santino's *Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle: Stories of Black Pullman Porters* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989) is based upon a series of excellent oral histories with retired porters and focuses on the social and cultural world of the men in the Pullman company's employ. Melinda Chateauvert's *Marching Together: Women of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998) breaks new ground in its reconstitution of the ideology and activities of the BSCP's Women's Economic Councils and the Women's Auxiliaries. Arnesen's *Brotherhoods of Color* deals with the broad spectrum of black unionization beyond the porters' ranks.



Truck drivers, U.S. Highway 40, New Castle vicinity, DE, 1943 *(John Vachon, LOC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

Teamsters in the Twentieth Century

Before the rise of motorized trucking, drays drawn by horse or mule facilitated the movement of goods within urban areas. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, New York cartmen—independent tradesmen who purchased licenses from the city and owned their own animals and carts—carried goods through the nation's largest city's unpaved dirt streets.[96] The motorized trucking industry developed during and after World War I, as mechanical advances, lower production costs for trucks, and the expansion of a nationwide system of usable roads made truck traffic economically feasible. The industry's later widespread unionization has its roots before the advent of motorized trucks. In the nineteenth century, small unions of team drivers came together to form the Team Drivers' International Union, which received its charter from the AFL in 1899. The union, which later changed its name to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), enrolled primarily delivery drivers (of such goods as ice, milk, laundry, and bread) in urban areas.[97]

The early years of the twentieth century were difficult for the teamsters, and for organized labor in general. Historian Dan La Botz explains, "The Teamsters union was built in the early days in cities throughout the country, through militant strikes and broad working-class solidarity, as

[96] Howard B. Rock, *Artisans of the New Republic: The Tradesmen of New York City in the Age of Jefferson* (New York: New York University Press, 1979); Graham Russell Hodges, *New York City Cartmen, 1667-1850* (New York: New York University Press, 1986).

[97] James H. Thomas, *The Long Haul: Truckers, Truck Stops and Trucking* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1979), 12-73.

other labor unions and the public joined to back the drivers in the fight for a decent living."[98] The Teamsters' first major battle was waged against the notorious Beef Trust that controlled the Chicago stockyards. In the spring of 1902, workers at the Union Stockyards who belonged to the Packing House Teamsters' Union demanded an increase in wages and pay for overtime work so that they would receive more just compensation for workdays that ran between sixteen and eighteen hours. Like other emerging unions, they also demanded that the packing-house owners recognize their union and the establishment of a union shop. When the owners refused to meet any of the workers' demands, the Teamsters called a strike on May 25. While the Teamsters' picket lines prevented non-union drivers from entering the stockyards, workers in other industries acted in solidarity: railroad workers, drivers for express companies, and luggers at the Fulton Market all refused to handle the meat from the large packing houses; National Box Company workers refused to make boxes to hold the meat; ice wagon drivers refused to deliver ice to butchers that continued to sell meat from beef companies during the strike; coal drivers informed refrigeration plants that they would not make deliveries to those that continued to work with the packers as well. Members of other unions launched a beef boycott, and 1,200 small butcher shops run by Polish, Jewish, and Lithuanian immigrants also closed in solidarity with the Teamsters and to protest the Beef Trust's monopolistic practices.

The 1902 strike not only illustrates the interconnectivity of different sectors of industrial labor, but also reveals the ways in which working-class communities supported the struggles of organized labor. Rather than occurring on the outskirts of the city, the strike's battles were waged on the open streets of Chicago. La Botz describes the scene as follows:

> When packers tried to move a convoy of thirty-five wagons downtown, it was followed along the route by thousands of Teamsters and other workers. At Clark and Harrison the crowd tried to overturn the wagons, and was stopped only when fifty policemen attacked with clubs. At the same time several thousand strike sympathizers fought the police at Halstead and Division Streets. Downtown in the Loop the police attempted to clear a path for wagons in a crowd of 50,000 strike supporters. Union hatmakers came out on to a fire escape on Fifth Avenue to throw objects at the scab drivers.

Of all the demonstrators, police singled out women as the "most dangerous persons with which the police [had] to deal." Gathering at windows along the convoy routes, they would throw anything they could at the scab drivers and their police escorts. When the strike finally ended almost two weeks later on June 2, the Teamsters had succeeded in securing a pay raise but had failed in forcing the packers to recognize their union.[99]

Teamster unions were rather decentralized during the early days, with rival factions often competing against each other. Organizers attempted to overcome this factionalism by organizing a meeting in Niagara Falls during the summer of 1903 to unite the different Teamster unions. It was at that meeting that the new International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) began, with Cornelius 'Con' Shea as the inaugural president. The union's first challenge took place again in

[98] Dan La Botz, *Rank-and-File Rebellion: Teamsters for a Democratic Union* (London: Verso, 1990), 85.
[99] La Botz, *Rank-and-File Rebellion*, 84-85; George Leidenberger, *Chicago's Progressive Alliance: Labor and the Bid for Public Streetcars* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 22-23.

Chicago. When the Chicago garment workers of Montgomery Ward went on strike in 1905, drivers for the company launched a sympathy strike. Despite their calls for assistance, IBT leaders refused to assist the Chicago Teamsters in what would become an extremely violent strike resulting in the deaths of twenty-one and injuries of 415 of those involved.

After the beef strike, employers in Chicago organized into the Employers' Association (EA). Chastened by the disastrous open street battles of that strike, EA members commissioned the construction of underground railway tunnels to bring supplies to downtown businesses. Doing so would enable them to avoid any Teamster blockades above ground and hopefully undermine the fledgling union. Regardless, the streets of downtown Chicago turned into sites of violent clashes between strikers and the police once again. Even students did their part to support the strike. On May 10, eight hundred students at the Hendricks School in South Side Chicago walked out of their classrooms after seeing deliveries of coal driven by strikebreakers. Soon, this student strike spread to eight other schools, primarily on the South Side.[100]

While strikes like this united different segments of the working class in Chicago, they also served to exacerbate racial tensions. While some unionists, notably elevator operators, worked across racial lines and fought against employers who tried to manipulate racial divisions to thwart unions, others were not nearly as racially inclusive. Some unions organized African Americans into separate locals and others prevented African Americans from organizing altogether. This not only divided the working class, but also created a situation in which African Americans began serving as a strikebreakers. During a building trade strike of 1900, one African American strikebreaker explained, "You don't let us into your unions and then you don't expect us to work; what shall we do—starve?" During the 1905 strike, employers primarily relied on African Americans to serve as strikebreakers, one thousand of whom were recruited from the Mississippi Delta for this express purpose. This exacerbated racial tensions to such a degree that mobs of strikers and sympathizers attacked African Americans indiscriminately, even if they had no connection to the walkout. After one particularly violent incident between White strikers and Black strikebreakers, mobs began to openly attack any African American resident, even going so far as to drag African American passengers from streetcars.[101]

After the defeat of the Montgomery Ward strike, Shea was brought up on charges of corruption and extortion—in what would become an all-too familiar story for the Teamsters over the next several decades. Corruption in Teamsters' unions was especially rampant in cities during the era of prohibition. Members of organized crime syndicates tried to forcibly take control of Teamster locals in order to move their stock of illicit liquor. In Chicago, independent and IBT locals fell under the control of Al Capone's mob. Some Teamster officials tried to seek help from rival mobs to remove gangsters from office, but this only tied the Teamsters more closely to organized crime and increased the level of violence. By the early 1930s, politicians representing the business interests in the city had begun to purge the union of mob connections and all Chicago Teamsters were organized under the national IBT; only those with a clean record were allowed to join the union.[102]

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[100] Leidenberger, Chicago's Progressive Alliance, 101, 105.
[101] Leidenberger, *Chicago's Progressive Alliance*, 41, 105-106.
[102] La Botz, Rank-and-File Rebellion, 86-87.

By the 1930s, the union's leaders, especially its president, Dan Tobin, were conservative. Born in County Clare, Ireland, in 1875, Tobin first joined the Teamsters in 1900, signing on with Boston Local 25 of the new Team Drivers International Union after he began to sell cheese and butter from a wagon. Opposing industrial unionism and the character of those who worked in it at the 1935 AFL convention in Atlantic City, Tobin described mass production workers as "the rubbish at labor's door." The previous year, he had opposed West Coast radicals, and organizer Harry Bridges in particular, in the San Francisco General Strike.

The Depression had hit the Teamsters hard, and union membership plummeted. The year 1934, however, witnessed a tremendous upheaval in the ranks of organized teamsters in the city of Minneapolis, a bastion of the open shop. Inspired by Section 7a of the National Industrial Recovery Act, truck drivers joined the upsurge of unionization that was sweeping the nation. Despite small numbers, a group of Teamsters decided to launch a strike in 1934 among coal yard workers to gain union recognition. When the IBT refused to assist in the strike, rank-and-file workers took it upon themselves to launch and sustain the effort. In January, Teamsters Local 574 voted to strike. The strike began on February 4, 1934, during the middle of a deep freeze, and shut down several coal yards. The Minnesota winter served their purposes well, and the Teamsters won the strike in only three days. After the success of the coal strike, leaders of Local 574 turned their attention to organizing the entire trucking industry of Minneapolis under a single union. Organizers held a mass meeting at the Schubert Theater on April 15, 1934, during which they registered 3,000 new members and planned a strike should employers refuse to recognize the union. With support from the Minneapolis AFL, the Minnesota Farmers' Holiday Association, and unemployed workers throughout the city, Local 574 launched its fight. The opposing force was a collection of employers organized as the Citizens' Alliance, and they formed their own network of supporters to fight the union effort.

Under the leadership of Trotskyist (Socialist Workers' Party) unionists, the Dunne Brothers and Karl Skogeland, the local next spearheaded a general strike in May that, in the words of the city's sheriff, "had the town tied up tight. Not a truck could move in Minneapolis." (The strikers, however, allowed the transportation of essential goods like milk, ice, and coal, provided that union truckers delivered the goods). The strike officially began on May 15, 1934, and the union's membership ranks almost immediately doubled to 6,000. The union took up residency at a large garage on 1900 Chicago Avenue, and members set to work providing food, medical care, and general support for the picketing strikers and their supporters. The strikers and their wives ran a kitchen and an infirmary (or field hospital, as an organizer called it) and published their own newspaper, *The Organizer*, out of their operational headquarters.

In the end, some 35,000 building trades workers joined the walkout. The Farmer's Holiday Association, along with several local grocers, supplied food and guest speakers, and entertainers provided entertainment and encouragement every night to the almost 2,000 Teamsters who attended nightly meetings. Local lawyers provided legal assistance, doctors and medical students provided medical care, and other union members and students joined in walking picket lines.

The leaders of the Minneapolis Local 574 recognized that they needed to secure the support of women—the wives, mothers, sisters, and girlfriends of the union members—to ensure the success of the union. During the May strike, leaders initiated a Ladies' Auxiliary to assist in strike activities. Historian Marjory Penn Lasky argues that union members often sought to

organize women into auxiliaries primarily to perform functions typically done by women (e.g. secretarial tasks, providing food services, cleaning the hall, and the like) for the union. With Clara Dunn and Marvel Scholl (Dobbs) at the helm, the Ladies' Auxiliary put women to work. Although they continued to perform primarily domestic functions, the auxiliary members now did these tasks in the public sphere. Women supplied food for picketers, bought groceries for families of striking workers, and nursed injured picketers. During one evening, women even joined men on the picket line to stop truck deliveries on Tribune Alley and were subject to the same police brutality as the male demonstrators; all received injuries of some degree, and a few were brought back to the strike headquarters with broken legs or in an unconscious state.

Although the violence perpetrated against the women demonstrators led the union to restrict women from the picket lines, this did not mean that women left public demonstrations altogether. On May 21, Scholl led a march of women to City Hall to demand that the mayor remove the special deputies, fire the police chief, and cease police violence against the demonstrators. Although this march was planned so that women could avoid another demonstration at the Central Market that was expected to draw a violent response, the march on City Hall kept the auxiliary women firmly in the public view. Women also continued to work in public by selling copies of *The Organizer* on corners, as well as in bars, restaurants, and beauty salons.[103]

The climax of this phase of strike activity occurred on May 21. A violent police attack on picketers met with an organized response by hundreds of armed strikers, in a clash that left dozens injured. The following day, between 20,000 and 30,000 people renewed the battle in the city's central marketplace in what became known as the "Battle of Deputies Run." A renewal of the strike produced more casualties on July 20 before the governor declared martial law. On August 1, the state National Guard took over the strike headquarters and arrested its leaders. Days later, the governor ordered the raid of the Citizen's Alliance. Eventually, the Minneapolis strike gained national attention. Fearing that the strike would hurt Democrats in the fall election, President Roosevelt dispatched a federal mediator to resolve the strike. With pressure from the federal government, the employers of the Citizens' Alliance capitulated, and workers received a wage increase, union recognition, and the reinstatement of workers who had been fired because of their organizing activities. In the end, the four-month long conflict ended with a victory for the strikers.[104] The radical local 574 grew in size and influence until World War II, when the federal government arrested the union's Trotskyist leadership for opposition to the war.

Since the mid-1930s, national Teamster leaders Tobin, Dave Beck, and James Hoffa had studied the Minneapolis union's strategy, copied organizing techniques, and expanded the size of the IBT (the International grew to over half a million by 1941, up from 80,000 in 1932 and 135,000 in 1937). Especially under Hoffa's leadership, the union secured contracts providing for high

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[103] Marjory Penn Lasky, "When I was a Person: The Ladies' Auxiliary in the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters' Strike," in *Women, Work & Protest: A Century of U.S. Women's Labor History*, ed. Ruth Milkman (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 182, 186, 188, 190, 193. Like many other women's auxiliaries, this one formed in response to a crisis—the strike of 1934—and dissipated after it ended. Yet, while it existed, the women of the Ladies' Auxiliary played an important role in the Teamster's strike.

[104] Jeremy Brecher, *Strike*! (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1972), 161-66; Farrell Dobbs, *Teamster Rebellion* (New York: Monad Press, 1972); Farrell Dobbs, *Teamster Power* (New York: Monad Press, 1973); Thomas R. Brooks, *Toil and Trouble: A History of American Labor* (New York: Delta Publishing Co., 1971), 165-67; La Botz, *Rank-and-File Rebellion*, 91-97.

wages and good benefits. Centralized, pattern bargaining provided for uniform conditions for Teamster members. Revelations by racketeering investigations of the union's internal corruption and ties to organized crime led to the IBT's expulsion from the AFL in 1957. Although it had grown to become the nation's largest trade union by the 1960s, continued corruption and the deregulation of the trucking industry by the Reagan Administration—which promoted the growth of nonunion truck operators—took a toll on the union by the 1980s. A federal take-over of the IBT and the rise of reform leaders, backed by the Teamsters for a Democratic Union, breathed new life into the almost century-old organization in the 1990s.[105]


TEAMSTERS SAY:
40 HOURS
5 DAYS
SANITATION TEAMSTERS NEED HALF PAY PENSIONS AFTER 20 YEARS
TEAMSTER PAY FOR TEAMSTER WORK
TEAMSTERS SAY: 500. IS A RAISE
150. IS A TOKEN
POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

Teamster Union members holding picket signs supporting higher raises and pensions, New York, NY, 1954
(Dick DeMarsico, LOC P&P, New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection)

Conclusion

From the age of sail to the age of steam, from the era of canals to the era of highways, from overland, animal-drawn transport to that of railroads, trucks, and airplanes—the transportation sector has supported a heterogeneous work force in terms of skill, race, and ethnicity. Irish canal builders, Chinese and Irish rail track laborers, and African American sailors and Pullman porters all demonstrated a desire for individual and group advancement. By the mid-twentieth century, successful unionization had occurred in most areas of transportation. While by no means

[105] Estelle James, "Jimmy Hoffa: Labor Hero or Labor's Own Foe?" in *Labor Leaders in America*, eds. Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 303-323; Dan La Botz, *Rank-and-File Rebellion* (New York: Verso, 1990).

eliminating poor conditions, low wages, or racial discrimination, unionization improved workers' standards of living, and shifted control away from management toward labor.

Since the Second World War, however, transportation has undergone technological and organizational changes that have had implications for the character and quality of work and union influence. The railroad (particularly passenger service) and shipping industries have undergone serious decline, and the "containerization" revolution on the waterfronts has reduced the number of low wage dock workers. From the 1970s through the 1990s, government deregulation of the trucking industry and the rise of strong, anti-union employers has weakened, and in some cases eliminated, unions, producing substantial wage cuts and the worsening of on-the-job conditions. The history of the transportation industry demonstrates that economic development came with a high price in human life and suffering. But workers' collective efforts altered the balance of power, reshaped social relations at the workplace, and spurred significant improvements.

SERVICE WORKERS IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS[1]


NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA
ARGENTINA • BAHAMAS • BERMUDA • BRAZIL • CANADA • CHILE • COLOMBIA • COSTA RICA • CUBA
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC • GUATEMALA • HONDURAS • MEXICO • NICARAGUA • PANAMA • PARAGUAY • PERU
URUGUAY • VENEZUELA
LONDON
PARIS

A Bell Telephone Company switchboard, 1943 (unknown photographer, NARA
https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/way-we-worked/assets/img/2.15.jpg)

Public and white-collar working sites are often invisible or overlooked in labor history. Insurance workers who launched picket lines in the early 1970s typically did so in isolated and obscure suburban industrial parks; sales clerks labored in large department stores, recognized more for fostering a culture of consumption rather than a culture of labor. To better appreciate the significance of places where workers are hidden in plain sight, it is essential to understand important structural changes in business and the economy and in the nature of public and private white-collar work.

By the middle of the twentieth century, the category of public workers included professionals, semi-professionals, manual laborers, and clerical and office workers; white-collar workers in the private sector included those from the lowest paid office gopher to managerial staff at the upper

[1] Marjorie Murphy, Professor of History at Swarthmore College, and Rachel Donaldson, Associate Professor of History at College of Charleston prepared this essay. Dr. Murphy is an expert on teachers' unions and the author of *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (Cornell University Press, 1990), which traces the history of the unionization of public school teachers. More generally, Dr. Murphy is knowledgeable on American labor history, public sector unionism, and women's history. Dr. Donaldson has published on the cultural politics of the folk music revival. Her books include *"I Hear America Singing": Folk Music and National Identity, 1930-1970* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014) and (co-authored with Ronald D. Cohen) *Roots of the Revival: American and British Folk Music in the 1950s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014). She is a historian of labor and cultural history and a historic preservationist.

end of the ladder, as well as retail clerks in stores large and small. Segmentation of workers into categories of class and status permeated white-collar occupations. Despite locations in central business districts of most cities, white-collar work, especially in the private sector, often excluded African Americans and foreign-born workers from the nineteenth century through much of the twentieth.[2]

This essay explores workers in the public and private service industry, broadly speaking. The labor that white-collar workers performed differed from that of their blue-collar counterparts, but their experiences in wage-labor and labor disputes from the nineteenth through twenty-first centuries place these workers firmly in the camp of labor history. Eric Olin Wright has argued that the lack of autonomy on the job for most white-collar workers places them in the working class, though he recognizes that the criterion of autonomy becomes more problematic as one moves up from the lowest rung of white-collar workers.[3] While some labor historians have dismissed white-collar service work as non-working class, this position ignores the working-class men who joined these ranks, the relatively high wages this work offered women, and organizing efforts that women in the service sector have launched since World War II—issues that are intrinsic to working-class history. The greatest success in unionization for white-collar work has come in the form of public employee unionism, where female schoolteachers, for example, rejected notions of semi-professionalism and opted for a strategy of solidarity. Labor analysts contend that while most of the net union growth since the 1960s has been white collar, organization occurred primarily in the public sector, leaving a vast group of unorganized white- and blue-collar workers.[4]

To understand the evolution of white-collar employment and the opportunities that it offered to some Americans, while denying them to others, we need to examine the parallel developments of the private and public sectors—from the evolution of retail trades into the modern department store, to the struggle for unionization among municipal and government workers. While these developments occurred in the twentieth century, their roots stretch back to the mid-nineteenth century, when workers first began their struggles for higher wages, better working conditions, and greater respectability—demands articulated by every sector of labor in America.

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[2] David M. Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1-15; Ileen A. DeVault, *Sons and Daughters of Labor: Class and Clerical Work in Turn-of-the-Century Pittsburgh* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 9-23.

[3] Eric Olin Wright, *Class, Crisis and the State* (London: Verso, 1979), 26-28.

[4] Sharon Hartman Strom, "Challenging 'Woman's Place' Feminism, the Left and Industrial Unionism in the 1930's," *Feminist Studies*, 9 (Summer, 1983), 359-86; Ava Baron, "Gender and Labor History: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future," in *Work Engendered, Toward a New History of American Labor*, ed. Ava Baron (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1-46; Kim Moody, *An Injury to All: The Decline of American Unionism* (New York: Verso, 1988), 210.



Stenographers' room, Leland & Faulconer Manufacturing Co., Detroit, MI, 1903 *(LOC P&P, Detroit)*

Private White-Collar Work

White-collar work in the private sector was dominated by clerical work beginning in the eighteenth century. Working in offices, stores, and other small businesses, clerks occupied a specific position in the growing American economy and rising industrialization. "Although commercial clerks may have been the faces of capitalism," historian Brian Luskey argues, "they were not the power brokers of capitalist transformation and lacked the authority to make unchallenged assertions about who they were and who they would become." The mid-nineteenth century witnessed a slow migration of White men who moved from rural areas to cities in search of work, most often as clerks in small businesses and professional offices. During this period, young sales clerks saw their position as akin to apprenticeships and took solace in the fact that one of the premier founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin, had been perhaps the original American sales clerk. Although they had ambitions and strove to better jobs, the work that they secured was not nearly as glamorous or conducive to facilitating upward mobility as they presumed. Early in the nineteenth century, clerks likely viewed their jobs as a step towards small business ownership. However, as the economy consolidated during an era of corporatization in the Gilded Age, clerks instead sought a niche in the emerging retail bureaucracy by becoming branch store managers, agents, or clerk merchants for large stores. In the seemingly constant boom-bust

economic cycles of the late-nineteenth century, being connected to a large establishment seemed a safer option than striking out on one's own.[5]

Not only did clerking fail to provide a firm path towards upward mobility, but many clerks, especially African Americans and recent immigrants, were also subject to ethnic and racial discrimination and economic limitations. Arriving in increasing numbers after the 1840s, immigrants such as the Irish and Germans often only found work in poor, urban, ethnically-defined enclaves like the notorious Five Points neighborhood in New York City. Lacking connections to lucrative positions in wholesaling firms, immigrant clerks were more likely to work at grocery stores, pawnshops, and other small commercial establishments, the proprietors of which shared the clerks' ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Overwhelmingly, clerks during the mid-nineteenth century were White and male. In New York City, the federal census of 1850 counted only seven "colored" men as clerks, all of whom were "mulatto"; by 1855 that number had only risen to eighteen. Race was a definite impediment to entry into the white-collar world of the urban clerk. Even educated African Americans often settled for jobs as porters or draymen because of the racial proscriptions that barred them from entering skilled or service work. During the 1830s, women began to make some inroads into the world of sales clerking, occupying positions in large stores in major cities like Philadelphia and Boston; in New York City, however, they comprised only 3 percent of the clerk workforce as late as the 1850s.[6]

Between 1890 and 1910, the number of office and sales workers exploded during a time of business expansion that historians refer to as the "administrative revolution" or the "managerial revolution." During this period, the apprenticeship model, according to which clerks learned directly from the small store-owners for whom they worked, crumbled as clerks more often labored under a series of mid-level store managers and learned the trade through schools rather than directly from business owners. Not coincidentally, it was also during this time that the dream of a clerkship leading to small business ownership also collapsed under the weight of the large-scale commercial store enterprises that dominated the retail markets of industrial cities.

Rather than being disconnected from the world of industrial work, sales and office employees played a critical role in America's industrialization. Historian Jerome Bjelopera explains, "Clerks, bookkeepers, secretaries, and stenographers processed the paperwork that businesses needed to prosper, and salespeople connected millions of consumers with the products of the industrial age." Clerks of the industrial-era were akin to industrial laborers because they did not own the means of production or the businesses where they worked, nor did they control the work of others (like managers or foremen). While "Clerical employees were paid workers subject to the gaze of management," their jobs were not nearly as strenuous as the blue-collar labor force. Furthermore, while they were subject to economic fluctuations, experiencing periods of

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[5] Brian P. Luskey, *On the Make: Clerks and the Quest for Capital in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 2-3, Luskey sees this shift as a "necessary precursor" to the rise of "corporate business structures" that emerged during the Gilded Age.

[6] Luskey, *On the Make*, 8, 16, 38, 65, 67. Stores that catered to the elite as well as working-class stores in ethnic neighborhoods employed mostly male clerks. The reasons exactly why women were excluded from retail work during the early decades of the nineteenth century are unclear; they would come to dominate the field by the end of the century.

underemployment and temporary layoffs during economic downswings, clerks had the luxury of knowing that when times improved, they most likely would resume fulltime work.[7]

In their desire to attain middle-class status, clerical workers tried to disconnect themselves from the toiling masses of blue-collar workers. Despite the inability of most clerks to become small business owners, the dream was powerful enough to thwart unionization efforts during the early twentieth century. Few supported efforts to challenge management control and unfair practices. The clerical workforce occupied a middle ground: below professionals and above skilled blue-collar workers. This status was more ideological than economical, for many—especially women—did not surpass skilled workers in wages. However, one clear line of separation between the white-collar and blue-collar worker during this time is that the former had more job benefits, such as a clean, safe working environment and the ability to earn vacation time. Yet, despite these occupational perks, white-collar workers also labored under constant supervision and often had to work long hours for low wages—grievances that they shared with industrial blue-collar workers.[8]

Clerical Education

A clear point of division between white- and blue-collar workers was the former's higher degree of formal education. Although most white-collar workers did not attend four-year colleges as did professionals, they did enroll in specialized classes in commercial high-school programs for clerical training and/or attended two-year business colleges. A model of the kind of business school that emerged during the nineteenth century was the Peirce School, founded in 1865 as the Union Business College of Philadelphia to train workers in the clerical sector. By the turn of the twentieth century, the school had become the largest business school in the country outside of the great universities, or so its publicity claimed. To help cement its relationship with the growing business world in Philadelphia, school directors relocated the school to the Inman Building at the corner of Tenth and Chestnut Streets, near the heart of the business district, in 1869. After another relocation in 1881, it moved to its final and current location on Pine Street in 1915. From its founding, Peirce accepted both men and women, although classes were sexually segregated and courses fell along gender lines, with certain courses (e.g. secretarial work) specifically taught to women. Academic standards to enroll in the Peirce School were low; at one point applicants need only demonstrate a "desire to learn" to gain admittance. By the 1880s, the courses broadened specifically to accommodate students who lacked an educational background, and the school began offering classes in basic English and math skills.

Business schools like the Peirce School played an important role both in educating the white-collar workforce and in connecting graduates with jobs. Many students secured their first positions through the school's Employment Department, which began operating in the 1890s. Pamphlets listing the numerous students who obtained work through the Employment Department became a primary means for student recruitment after 1900. Indeed, numerous businesses contacted the department directly whenever they had job openings, and department staff worked to find students who possessed the kinds of traits that businesses stipulated they

[7] Jerome P. Bjelopera, *City of Clerks: Office and Sales Workers in Philadelphia, 1870-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 2, 14; Luskey, *On the Make*, 62.
[8] Bjelopera, *City of Clerks*, 2, 18.

needed. Gender played a particularly important role in the hiring process, as companies and businesses often specified whether they sought male or female employees.[9] Soon, business schools akin to Peirce began to spread across the country, promoting themselves as the key to upward mobility in white-collar work. In Los Angeles, the Isaacs-Woodbury Business College taught clerical skills to both men and women, and, like other business schools, marketed itself as a "gateway to entrepreneurship," feeding the dream that a clerk position could potentially lead to the independence of small business ownership.[10]

Business schools primarily trained students for jobs in office work. However, the office clerk was just one type of clerical position; the other, of course, was the retail clerk. Jobs in retail work necessitated a modified set of skills that required a different sort of training. The model for modern retail training began in a school founded by Lucinda Wyman Prince, a member of the college settlement movement. Beginning in 1905, Prince offered a series of classes in the Women's Educational and Industrial Union in Boston to teach saleswomen how to work more efficiently. By this time, Taylorism had moved into the clerical sector, which explains why employers were eager to hire women. In the rush for expediency and efficiency, managers and owners viewed women, particularly young women, as the "cheapest, most tractable segment of the working population." Their history in the repetitive work of industrial jobs made them well suited to work office machines, or so bosses believed. Owners of retail stores shared similar views, and Prince believed that, if they learned to be more efficient, female sales clerks could command higher salaries. The program's remarkable success led Prince to begin training teachers of saleswomen and to gain affiliation with Simmons College in Boston in 1913. By the end of the 1920s, major universities such as New York University, Ohio State University, the University of Pittsburgh, and others had established their own retail training programs mirroring the model established by Prince.[11]

[9] High school business-education programs played a similar role in securing jobs for recent graduates in clerical work.

[10] Bjelopera, *City of Clerks*, 33-34, 60-61, 67, 70; Gary Cross and Peter Shergold, "'We Think We are of the Oppressed': Gender, White Collar Work, and the Grievances of Late Nineteenth-Century Women," *Labor History* 28 (1987): 49; Clark Davis, *Company Men: White-Collar Life and Corporate Cultures in Los Angeles, 1892-1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 83.

[11] Bjelopera, City of Clerks, 27; Susan Porter Benson, Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 151-52.



Wanamaker's Store, New York, NY, c. 1905 *(LOC P&P, Detroit)*

Department Stores

During the nineteenth century retail work became a primary avenue for white-collar clerks. Near the end of the century, retail clerks experienced a profound shift in both their social makeup and the circumstances of their work. Prior to this time, men had dominated the field. Yet, gradually, storeowners began to see saleswomen as more apt at addressing the needs of a predominantly female consumer base.[12] The other remarkable change was the explosion in the scale and staffing of retail stores; the nineteenth century marked the dawn of the large-scale, multi-leveled, modern department store. Its first incarnation came in the form of the urban emporium, which specifically catered to the needs of elite consumers during the 1850s. Trading cards advertising emporia like George Bulpin's mantilla emporium on Broadway in New York City depicted them as places far from the madding crowd, where wealthy customers could shop in peace surrounded by attentive salespeople waiting to tend to their every need.[13] Soon, these emporia began to morph into the modern department store, where each department focused on a specific set of goods staffed by specially-trained sales clerks.

Department stores had secured their reign over retail trade in urban America by the 1890s. New stores like Younker Brothers in Des Moines, Iowa; Rich's in Atlanta, Georgia; and G. Fox and Company in Hartford, Connecticut, joined the ranks of Macy's (R. H. Macy and Company Store, New York City, NHL, 1978), Wanamaker's (John Wanamaker Store, Philadelphia, NHL, 1978),

[12] Historian Brian Luskey notes that the public had a rather ambivalent view of male sales clerks even when they were the primary faces of sales work. The term "counter jumper" entered the popular lexicon during the mid-nineteenth century. While clerks would like to think that it represented their go-getting attitude and willingness to go through great lengths to serve the customer, the term was pejorative, referring to lazy male clerks who only sprang into action in order to flirt with female customers and sell them needless baubles. Male sales clerks were, unfortunately, facilitators of consumerism during an era when American exalted producerism (Luskey, *On the Make*, 13, 86).

[13] Luskey, *On the Make*, 92-93.

and Marshall Field (Marshall Field Company Store, Chicago, NHL, 1978), the pioneers in the field. The sheer size of the modern stores was overwhelming. Historian Susan Benson notes that "The Marshall Field and the R. H. Macy Herald Square stores, both completed in 1902, each had over one million square feet of floor space; four factories the size of Ford's Highland Park Plant would have fit comfortably inside either store." Located in the prime real estate markets of downtown urban centers, large department stores built vertically to maximize on space. The huge stores required a large workforce—by 1898, Macy's was employing over three thousand workers, placing it on par with industrial giants like Merrimack Mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, and Carnegie Steel's J. Edgar Thompson plant. Strawbridge and Clothier, a department store in Philadelphia, employed over five-thousand workers, most of whom were in sales, in 1908 alone. Managers, therefore, had to supervise a large staff, not to mention the public who streamed into the stores each day as customers or browsers.[14]

As "palaces" of consumerism, department stores truly were opulent. Susan Benson describes the typical experience of entering one of these stores as follows: "[T]he customer entered through a grand marble arcade lighted by stained-glass skylights and chandeliers. The rotunda was a frequent feature of department stores; the upper floors formed galleries around a central court topped at roof level with leaded or plain glass. Fine woods, gleaming marble, and luxurious carpets were staples of department-store decoration." Female department store sales clerks were in "the Cinderella of occupations," outranking women working in factories, as waitresses, or in domestic service. Other jobs, even clerical work, could not always compete with department store selling, where "excitement and gentility … often outweighed the possibilities of higher earnings in factories." Mechanization and division of labor made clerical jobs less attractive, while sociability, "opportunities for self-culture and education," upward mobility, and glamour made the "selling floor" appealing. Unlike office work, which often proved dull, the department store was part of the culture of consumption.[15]

Still, this work was not easy. Salespeople were expected to be on their feet all day; stores often ignored legislation stipulating that employers must provide seats for employees during downtimes. Rather, managers mandated that clerks organize stock during slow periods and often fired workers who challenged this practice. Yet this did not stop workers (and sympathetic outsiders) from attempting to reform conditions within department stores.

[14] Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 31-34; Bjelopera, *City of Clerks*, 50-51.
[15] Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 19, 181, 217.



Department store salesclerk with customer in corset department, c. 1923 (LOC P&P)

A unique problem that department store owners and managers faced was that their labor policies were visible to almost anyone. Reformers could easily investigate conditions by directly asking workers about their experiences, for the nature of retail work centered on interactions between clerks and potential customers. Visibly overworked and underpaid sales clerks, especially women, became an affront to middle-class reformers of the Progressive era, who initiated campaigns to alleviate bad working conditions. Reformers connected to the National Consumers League, the Woman's Trade Union League, and the Young Women's Christian Association investigated working conditions in department stores primarily from the 1880s through the 1920s. Some focused on the poor conditions of the working space—bad lighting, poor ventilation, inadequate seating, and unsanitary toilet and lunchroom facilities—while others emphasized the shortcomings of management politics—long hours, paltry wages, humiliating disciplinary actions, fines for petty rule infractions, and rules against using seats even when available. Still others highlighted the effects of these conditions on the workers' lives by emphasizing the health problems, exhaustion, and poor social life that saleswomen suffered. Finally, some reformers argued that a combination of working for the public and low wages led some saleswomen into a life of prostitution because "the saleswoman was in perpetual danger, whether from madams, pimps, and lecherous men who enter the store as freely as respectable matrons or from bosses who were given to sexual harassment." The root of this problem was that these women were not paid a living wage.[16]

Retail owners soon recognized that they needed to treat their sales clerks relatively well, not only because their labor conditions were visible to the public at large, but also because clerks performed the very task of selling goods; unhappy clerks could easily jeopardize sales. Some

[16] Bjelopera, *City of Clerks*, 52; Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 128, 134-35.

retailers, therefore, improved conditions for workers on the job and during work breaks. Strawbridge and Clothier, for instance, provided job perks like a dining room in which hot meals were served to staff, a rooftop garden for employees to spend their breaks, and even an employee hospital. As early as 1880, the store established a voluntary Relief Association to provide sick relief and death benefits. As this example illustrates, welfare capitalism hit the retail sector even earlier than the manufacturing sector. Recreation and rest facilities, libraries, vacation retreats, dining rooms, infirmaries, savings banks, and gymnasiums first appeared during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The conditions of these services varied widely. The "dining rooms" at some stores were poorly furnished basements, whereas others, notably the Fifth Avenue location of Lord & Taylor, featured "luxurious rest and recreational facilities" as early as 1914. Some stores, like Filene's, encouraged employees to form store organizations to act as unions, albeit company ones. Employee benefits continued to expand during the 1920s, so much so that it had become "an accepted feature of department store life" by the eve of the Depression.[17]



Segregated offices for White and Black punch card processors tabulating 1940 census, Washington, DC, *(unknown photographer, NARA, Records of the Census Bureau [29-C-1B-38, 29-C-1B-39])*

Feminization and Race

Women entering clerical occupations at the close of the nineteenth century received high wages relative to women in other occupations. Given the alternatives of domestic labor or factory work, the private white-collar occupations, despite long hours, offered a better life. Hollywood even romanticized office typists and connected clerical workers with the emerging suffragist movement. But such portrayals did not address the alienation of office work. "The reality of office work for lower middle-class clerks lacked dramatic contrast and was overlooked" in the film industry, writes Gregory Bush. The appearance of equality linked with the image of the woman office worker thus proved deceptive.[18]

[17] Bjelopera, *City of Clerks*, 52-53; Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 145-46.

[18] Gregory Bush, "'I'd Prefer Not To:' A Research Note on Resistance to Office Work in Some Post World War II American Films," *Labor History* 31 (Summer 1990): 361-372; Margery Davies, *Woman's Place*, 62.

By the twentieth century, department store work had become overwhelmingly female, illustrating a pattern of women being concentrated in certain occupations rather than scattered throughout the labor force; by 1940 one in every sixteen working women worked in retail sales. While the clerical labor force, particularly in retail, became more inclusive of women, it remained the purview of White, native-born citizens. Some second-generation Americans were hired for jobs in this sector, but they were expected to "deemphasize their foreignness."[19]

Although members of ethnic minorities could secure retail or office jobs, this did not apply to African Americans. The clerical sector remained almost exclusively White into the twentieth century except among Black-owned businesses, few of which qualified as big businesses with large workforces. African Americans who did acquire jobs in department stores were largely relegated to low wage jobs as waiters, porters, or elevator operators. In northern cities, African Americans primarily found white-collar employment in civil service sectors such as the post office.[20]

Racial proscriptions denying African Americans and members of other racial and ethnic groups entry into white-collar clerical work also occurred on the West Coast. Los Angeles, according to historian Clark Davis, was a white-collar city: "By 1930, more than forty percent of employed male southern Californians worked in nonmanual positions, a figure significantly higher than the national average." Yet, in Los Angeles, as elsewhere in the country, few people of color worked as business office staff members during the nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries. According to a random sample of Los Angeles clerical employees from the 1920 U.S. census, over 99 percent were White. The barriers to white-collar corporate work led African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos to enter other forms of service work in teaching, social work, religious work, or small business ownership. When racist hiring practices prevented African Americans from obtaining work as clerks, many established their own businesses. During the mid-1920s the Golden State Life Insurance Company opened its doors and soon became the largest business owned and operated by African Americans west of Chicago. This company provided corporate opportunities for African American men and secretarial opportunities for African American women.[21]

Consumerism and Advertising

All businesses, business schools, and offices in the service sector, regardless of which ethnic or racial group owned them, needed to publicize their services. These entities therefore relied on advertisements to attract workers, customers, students, and clients. The relationship between advertisers and retailers was particularly strong. After all, the very purveyors of consumer culture were advertisers, and retail thrived during the consumerist decade of the 1920s. While they facilitated the growth of the white-collar sector, advertising firms were also sites of work—offices filled with copywriters, ad agents, photographers, and artists, all of whom belonged to the white-collar work force. Like the large retail stores, large advertising firms were located in major urban centers. Firms such as N. W. Ayers and Son maintained headquarters in Philadelphia,

[19] Bjelopera, *City of Clerks,* 22-25; Benson, *Counter Cultures,* 178.
[20] Bjelopera, *City of Clerks,* 22-25
[21] Davis, *Company Men,* 5-7, 14. Strangely, the clerical and managerial staff of corporate offices in L.A. were not just White, they were also overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon. Davis explains that business leaders attempted to cultivate a workforce of mostly those of British descent.

while Lord and Thomas kept headquarters in Chicago. By 1923, however, Madison Avenue represented the location of the largest national advertisers: "By the late 1920s, 247 Park Avenue, 285 Madison Avenue, and the Graybar building on Lexington Avenue near 42nd Street had become the three points of a triangle of bustling advertising activity," Roland Marchand explains. By the late 1920s, the print media became filled with advertisements—a single issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* often exceeded 200 pages. This magazine was the "nation's advertising showcase and the largest weekly in circulation." The Curtis building in Philadelphia, the same location for early experiments in scientific office management, was also where the *Post* was produced.[22]

Public White-Collar Work

Private businesses and industries were not the only avenues for workers to enter the realm of white-collar work. Governmental agencies, especially on the federal level, offered several types of white-collar jobs. Clerical work in federal offices experienced a significant expansion during the mid-nineteenth century. For some, the federal government provided many more opportunities than private businesses. During the Civil War, for instance, the employment of women in federal offices offered a host of new opportunities. Most of these women were well-educated widows, but some were single career women, who, for the first time, could command an independent salary. Feminization of federal offices promoted governmental reforms.

Civil service reform grew as a movement after the Civil War in the wake of several scandals at the local, state, and federal government levels. Many civil servants favored reform because the arbitrariness of political appointment had often deprived them of their livelihood and made them subject to incompetent leadership. The inability of the Republican Party to effect reform nearly lost them the election of 1876 and opened the way for serious discussion of operating a truly reformed system of separating appointed political office from jobs earned by merit through an impartial examination. The creation of the Civil Service Commission and the subsequent reclassification of job categories in the Postal Service and all other federal agencies led to minor changes. Many state governments had instituted reforms before the federal response, yet, by the turn of the century civil service was still an issue in most states because critics believed these initial attempts neither went far enough nor covered all branches of government.[23]

While public clerical work continued to attract women in the early twentieth century, teaching became especially appealing to thousands of women seeking a long-term occupation with upward mobility. Teaching was the fifth most important occupation for women in 1900, although increasingly difficult to enter. School critics demanded greater teacher qualifications. Previously, only limited secondary normal school training had been required, but by 1900, school boards wanted at least a high school diploma and evidence of post-secondary training. Teachers without these qualifications were frightened into returning to school for credentialing, while new recruits were tested and watched for signs of professional behavior. A new generation of college-educated women gained positions in high schools, setting a standard for elementary school

[22] Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985), 6-7; Bryan Burroughs and John Heylar, *Barbarians at the Gate: The Fall of RJR Nabisco* (New York: Harper, 1991), 29-32.

[23] Cindy Aron, "To Barter Their Souls for Gold: Female Clerks in Federal Government Offices, 1862-1890" *Journal of American History* 67 (1981): 835-853.

teachers. Ninety-eight percent of teachers in urban areas were in the school system longer than men but were rarely promoted to supervisory levels. The cities' large immigrant populations meant that schools could afford only cheap educational labor. Teachers formed veritable armies of white-collar workers numbering between 5,000 and 10,000 in large city school systems like Chicago, New York, and Detroit.[24]



Typewriting department, National Cash Register, Dayton, OH, c. 1902 *(William Henry Jackson, LOC P&P Detroit)*

Scientific Management in White-Collar Work

During the early twentieth century, the ranks of white-collar workers in the service industry swelled—a point evidenced by the explosion in the number of schoolteachers alone. This growth occurred at precisely the same time that blue-collar workers were streaming into the new factories, mills, and plants that mushroomed on the industrial landscape. One clear point of connection between white-collar workers in the public and private sectors and blue-collar workers in various industrial settings was that none of them had control over their own labor. In fact, during the early twentieth century, both white- and blue-collar workers were subject to the same kind of extreme oversight and micromanaging, which came in the form of Taylorism.

Frederick Winslow Taylor became gang boss over lathes at Midvale Steel in Philadelphia and argued that until he arrived the workers ran the shops, not the bosses. Taylor single-handedly

[24] See Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: the AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1990).

challenged the domination of skilled craftsmen over the labor process.[25] Centralized planning, systematic analysis of shop floor operations, ordering and detailing of supervisory instructions, and calculating wage payments to induce conformity were all aspects of the new type of management under Taylorism. While this system is well documented for the changes it imposed on the blue-collar manufacturing sector, Taylorism was also closely imbricated with white-collar work. Time and motion study experts set up cameras; machine tools were categorized, standardized, and accounted for by clerks; and detailed records became necessary. This process of scientific management transformed craftsmen and foremen into supervisory personnel who needed clerical help to make the factory operate smoothly. A specialist in routing, speeding, and stopwatch observation required elaborate record keeping, reports from inspectors, and calculations of piece scale incentives; as a result, white-collar jobs increased.

In 1907, William Henry Leffingwell began using the Taylor system at the Curtis Publishing Company in Philadelphia and published his results in what became the first in a series of office manuals, this one entitled "Scientific Management in the Office." Opening mail at this large mail order operation was reorganized so the handling clerk could open five hundred pieces of mail in one hour, instead of only one hundred. Leffingwell even measured how far away a drinking fountain could be placed so that thirsty workers would not lose aggregate numbers of hours walking a calculated 50,000 miles a year for a drink. One efficiency expert wrote, "Some typewriter concerns equip their machines with a mechanical contrivance which automatically counts the strokes on the typewriter and records them on a dial," but the strokes were not all accurate. Undaunted, the managers assessed the "relative efficiency of each clerk," thus underlining, in Harry Braverman's words, "the mystique" of science. One manager made a "time study of the evaporation of inks and found that non-evaporating ink wells could save a dollar a year on each inkwell," and Braverman wryly adds, "that the rate of evaporation of course varies with the humidity, and the results would not be constant."[26]

No aspect of American enterprise was immune to scientific management, least of all the public education system. Teachers, often suffragists who took a civic interest in urban politics, connected the politics of city hall to the politics of education. These women opposed the standards of scientific management in schools and argued that they were not laboratories for experimentation in business management styles. Despite resistance, centralization did enter into the management of public schools, although not all time-motion studies and staff-line management proved successful. The drive to lower educational costs was countered by the teachers' awareness of their numbers, organizational strength, and the symbolic function of public education in ideology. Common schools were part of what John Dewey called democracy in education, which included the idea that ordinary citizens had the right to a quality education. The argument was powerful but did little to raise salaries for teachers. Teachers proved weak at the bargaining table, largely because they were a large group of un-enfranchised public workers. Cutting any wage increase for them would substantially balance a city budget.[27]

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[25] "Frederick Winslow Taylor on the Principles of Scientific Management," in *Major Problems in the History of American Workers: Documents and Essays*, eds. Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath, 1991), 319-323.

[26] Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 311.

[27] Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, chapter 3.

Other public workers, like police and firemen, also suffered the blandishments of public-efficiency proponents although men could vote, which was a powerful weapon in public sector negotiations. In firefighting, professional departments had replaced volunteers by the end of the nineteenth century. Although these departments traditionally represented ethnic groups or neighborhoods, civil service reform in the cities changed these demographics; however, these groups still negotiated with the cities through ward representatives. Contact with city hall was haphazard, usually achieved through alliance with the powerful Patrolmen Benevolent Associations.[28]

Workers Organize

Historians have well documented blue-collar workers' struggles to organize and fight harsh working conditions and improve working-class life. These workers were not alone, however, for white-collar workers in the public and private service sectors took the initiative to improve conditions both on and off the job. During the late nineteenth century, white-collar workers formed fraternal associations specific to their line of work and to their city. In Philadelphia, bookkeepers formed the Bookkeepers' Beneficial Association in 1874, primarily to provide death benefits to members and to expand recreational programs. Local branches of national organizations also offered social, economic, and recreational opportunities for those who had the time and money to participate. During the 1890s, the Women's Christian Temperance Association (WCTA) of Philadelphia ran a summerhouse named "Sea Rest" on the Jersey Shore in Asbury Park. This was specifically for working women in Philadelphia to use as a vacation home; women in any occupation, so long as they were Protestant, were eligible for a room rental. Applicants had to apply in person at the WCTA's offices, located at 18th and Arch Streets, and supply reference letters to rent a room at 75 cents a day for a maximum stay of two weeks. Applicants also had to bring a friend, because rooms were only rented out to pairs of women.[29]

On the whole, however, public worker and white-collar unionization proceeded slowly during the early twentieth century. The slow pace of organization, in addition to leading labor leaders' ambivalent attitudes toward their inclusion in the labor movement, demonstrates the complexities of labor organization in the United States. For example, as one commentator has argued, AFL President Samuel Gompers, who held office from 1886 to 1924, drew a line between what he called "brain" workers and manual laborers, concluding that the two were incompatible and that the former were unreliable allies for the labor movement.[30] Despite his initial dismissal, some public workers, especially teachers, successfully formed unions at the turn of the century. The Chicago Teachers' Federation (CTF) was perhaps the strongest of these unions, with well over 5,000 members and a majority of the city' schoolteachers organized. Margaret Haley, a CTF leader, challenged centralization in public education, urged teachers to defy the school system's new managerial style, defeated legislation to make schools conform to efficiency, and argued that schools should serve not the Carnegies or Rockefellers, but instead the working people whose children came to learn. These teachers became the backbone of the Women's Trade

[28] Bruce Laurie, "Fire Companies and Gangs in Southwark: The 1840s," in *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-Class Life, 1790-1940* eds. Allen F. Davis and Mark Haller (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), 71-87.

[29] Bjelopera, *City of Clerks*, 82, 110.

[30] Gompers would change, or at least soften, his views regarding organizing public workers, specifically policemen, whose affiliation he supported during the WWI era.

Union League (WTUL), which organized in 1903 as an organization of middle-class women as well as women in the new industrially-organized garment trades and other manufacturing areas. The WTUL aided poor working women on strike, developed leadership of working women, and pushed the AFL leadership to hire female organizers. Teachers, clerical workers, and other higher-paid women contributed to the subscription list of the WTUL's popular publication, *Life and Labor*.[31]

Other similar teacher unions became important during the Progressive Era, and, as leaders in the community, teachers made union ties acceptable to other white-collar workers. In 1912, the federal government repealed its gag rule that denied federal employees the right to organize and petition Congress for wages. That same year the Federation of Federal Civil Service Employees in San Francisco affiliated with the AFL. Meanwhile, the National Federation of Letter Carriers rejected affiliation with the AFL in 1914; but a new industrial union, the National Federation of Postal Employees, formed in 1917 and voted 23,551 to 1,971 in favor of affiliation. In Washington, D.C., federal government workers formalized labor organizations, but squabbles with the AFL over union jurisdiction and a disastrous reclassification of job categories by the Bureau of Public Efficiency discredited their various organizations. Inflation resulting from World War I greatly affected public workers by the closing of the war in 1917 and 1918.[32]

Direct attacks on public employee unions began as early as 1913. In that year the Peoria, Illinois, school board introduced a yellow dog contract, which stated that teachers wishing to work in that city had to agree not to join a union. During that same year, the new Postmaster General, Albert Burleson, tried to repeal the legislation that rescinded the gag rule and pursued an anti-labor campaign. In 1915, a yellow dog rule introduced into the Chicago school system threatened 6,200 teachers with immediate dismissal. Despite his qualms about the teachers' union, his uncomfortable alliance with their allies in the WTUL, and his hostility toward the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, Samuel Gompers was outraged and came to the city to join a mass demonstration. The yellow dog rules daunted no one; teachers announced their determination to fight the counter-revolution of the managerial ethos. They had allies in the postal workers, other government workers, and a new sector of public service; in 1915, the AFL offices were flooded with a wave of policemen and firemen ready to join the ranks of labor.

Telephone Strikes and World War I

The wave of unionization continued through the United States' entry into the war. The unionization of public employees had its most dramatic impact in service work, specifically in the telephone strikes of the period from 1915 to 1919.

Telephone service was union free in its first two decades. The Bell System organized in 1878, and the International Brotherhood of Electric Workers obtained a charter in 1891 and signed its first contract in 1898, primarily for linemen and cable splicers. Feminization characterized the industry during its growth years. From 1900 to 1910, the number of female operators rose 475 percent.[33] In 1907, the Bell Company employed 96,000 of the 132,000 phone workers, and labor

[31] Murphy, Blackboard Unions, 70-73; Nancy Schron Dye, As Equals and as Sisters: Feminism, Unionism and the Women's Trade Union League (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1980), 82-85.
[32] Sterling Spero, *Government as Employer* (New York: Remson Press, 1948), 182-83, 134, 136, 146.
[33] Greenwald, *Women, War and Work* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), 10.

relations had grown hostile with a series of strikes in the craft unions. Operators, who by 1917 were 99 percent female, had been the poor cousins in this union; but Boston had a strong suffragist community. The WTUL had had its founding meeting there in 1903, and Margaret Haley, organizer of the Chicago Teachers' Federation, had been a regular visitor to the city. She had urged teachers to unionize, explained the victories for female workers in Chicago, and encouraged women to resist notions that demanding higher wages was selfish and unfeminine.

In 1912, New England operators brought their first list of demands and complaints before New England Bell managers: shorter hours, higher pay (they made $7.61 a week), extra pay for split tricks (nine-hour days split between morning and afternoon shifts), and less heavy-handed supervision (the Bell System had invested heavily in methods of scientific management).[34] The Boston operators' union, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), grew into the most militant, white-collar union of the early twentieth century under the leadership of Julia O'Connor. New England Bell softened its approach to the union, gave it a contract, and introduced welfare work, vacations, lunchrooms, and company stock to the workers. Much like retail clerks, operators directly interacted with consumers, such that the phone company recognized that service with a smile was important for telephone growth. Nevertheless, the phone company only needed to go so far in placating its workers. Higher wages during the inflation years of World War I were not part of the public picture. While men were dying in the trenches, female operators were expected to sacrifice as well. The problem was that the war was not popular, and the telephone workers did not believe the argument that they were supporting the war effort with wage cuts. Phone workers for Pacific Bell struck in November 1917, when 9,000 operators and 3,200 linemen left their posts; but coordination proved difficult. An anti-union campaign led by the California Better Business Association threatened the strike and its sympathizers. Finally, Samuel Gompers and the President's Mediation Commission were drawn into contract talks to get a swift settlement. On August 1, 1918, just months before the end of the war, the Postmaster General announced the take-over of the telephone industry "with the aim of insuring uninterrupted service."[35]

Albert Burleson, the anti-labor manager of the Post Office, attempted to lay down the heavy "invisible hand" of management on phone workers without success. One fire in phone company militancy had barely been squelched when another broke out in Wichita, Kansas, in December 1918. The war in Europe was over, and the unfair firing of a union representative brought community solidarity. Kansas police walked out at the same time, and the whole city government was threatened with a general strike. But Southwestern Bell had Burleson, and the use of its own private police force defeated the strike. The New England Union of Telephone operators struck on April 15, 1919, after a meeting in Faneuil Hall (Faneuil Hall, NHL, 1960). By June 1919, they had convinced Burleson to accept strikers' demands for salary negotiations, but not all the phone companies agreed with Burleson's settlement in the face of a general strike. The Bell System decided not to return to the status quo. As a result, more "hello girls" went on strike; but now the system was back in the private hands of a revitalized telephone company, and the community alliance the women had built fell apart. In the Twin Cities, the strike ended after twelve weeks in February 1919, with the same promise of arbitration and Burleson stalling as

[34] John S. Schacht, *The Making of Telephone Unionism, 1920-1947* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 6-9.
[35] Schacht, The Making of Telephone Unionism, 10.

before. The failure of phone workers to produce a general strike in June 1919 came from the power of the companies in league with Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer. The greatest threat, however, came with the lockout of public employees, notably the police, who proved unreliable in the telephone operators' uprising.

Uniformed Police: Blue-Coated Workers

During the years leading up to World War I, workers in various public sectors joined the telephone operators in the effort to organize their own unions. A notable example of this category was the police, particularly in Boston. The struggle to form police unions was especially complicated because police units were often dispatched to suppress strikes and arrest the organizers of other fledgling unions. Despite the checkered history between police and the labor movement, policemen had labor grievances of their own, and their efforts to organize mirrored the tribulations of other public employee unions.

The creation of a uniformed police department took place in a number of cities in the nineteenth century: Boston, 1838-59; New York, 1843-53; Cincinnati, 1848-59; and Denver, 1874.[36] The notion of a uniformed police force was not popular in certain cities.[37] Some argued that the centralization of the police force would take control of the police from the neighborhoods and put it in the hands of corrupt politicians or special corporate interests.

Large-scale catastrophes, such as the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, changed the minds of many Americans regarding the need for a centralized police force. After the fire, an army of urban refugees fleeing the devastation in their neighborhood, with children and belongings in tow, crossed over to the west side of the Chicago River, horrifying the middle class on that side of town.[38] Widespread looting and a crime spree followed the fire; some of the items in the possession of the refugees did not belong to them. The lack of police protection mobilized the city's middle class as a municipal league pushed for a uniformed police department under the auspices of the city council and the mayor. After the depression of 1873-1878, a new mayor found funds for a police force. By the economic downturn of 1885, however, the city was for the first time faced with the prospect of disorder as the unemployed tramped into the city looking for work at the same time that a rebellion in the newly-created police department was brewing.

The time for testing the relationship between the police and the labor movement came with the famous Haymarket Affair of 1886 (Haymarket Martyrs' Monument, NHL, 1997), when an unknown person threw a bomb into the ranks of mounted police officers during the eight-hour day strike at the McCormick Reaper plant. The policemen had just been promised a pay raise as the eight-hour day organizing drive of the Knights of Labor began. The Knights had been

[36] Eric H. Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America, 1860-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 45-50.

[37] In 1855, the debate over a uniformed police force offended progressives and radicals in Chicago, who argued that there was no place in a republic for a standing army of policemen.

[38] One observer described the post-fire exodus as follows: "All day long, too the homeless trooped through our West Side streets, begging at our doors for food and shelter—some grimly bearing their lot, others in tears, or frenzied with excitement. Over the few bridges that were still unburned they came, driving wagons filled with household goods, or trudging hand-in-hand with crying children, their backs bent to the weight of treasured objects, a baby's crib, maybe of a family portrait." Qtd. In Richard Sennett, *Families Against the City: Middle Class Homes of Industrial Chicago, 1872-1890* (New York: Vintage, 1970), 32.

successful in attracting policemen to their ranks, but the raise, with standardized uniforms included, suddenly assured the complete loyalty of the police department to business owners in the city, thus tipping the balance against the Knights. Moreover, the bomb provided a symbolic divide between the police and workers in the union, a divide that would continue into the twentieth century. Applications for admission of police unions into the American Federation of Labor (AFL) would not even be entertained until after 1915. The use of private police forces like the Pinkertons in the northeastern coalfields and in steel towns tended to raise police pay, which further isolated them from the labor movement. As long as Chicago could collect taxes and pass income into the pockets of policemen, they were a stable force for law and order under the direction of the mayor and city council.[39]

Police forces and organized labor maintained a relationship that vacillated between wariness and hostility. Municipal governments often relied on police to break up strikes and other labor demonstrations, often resulting in violence. Yet police officers often shared many of the same grievances as workers in other labor sectors. In Boston during the post-WWI period, police were subject to low pay (worsened by post-war inflation), long hours, an ineffective company union called the Boston Social Club that did not adequately represent their interests, and "despotic" supervisors. They also had to endure unsafe and unsanitary working conditions. In the Court Square Station House, located behind City Hall, a bedbug infestation ate through the leather police helmets and belts. The station also had only four toilets and one bathtub for 135 police officers.[40]

Public officials partly sought to thwart the unionization of police because they were seen as the very force to restore law and order during labor strikes. In 1919 alone, over 3,600 strikes with an estimated 4 million participants erupted across the nation. City officials feared that a unionized police force would stop performing their role as a strikebreaking force, a role that they had played exceedingly well in the past. Furthermore, as Massachusetts Governor Calvin Coolidge observed, police officers were in the peculiar position of being government workers. Despite enduring terrible working conditions, many politicians believed that the police did not have a *right* to unionize. Coolidge argued that the police were not "holders of a job" "because no private concern made a profit from their efforts"; they were therefore "public officers" rather than "employees." However, key events eventually challenged this view among AFL officials.

The AFL first entered the world of organizing government workers in 1906 when it chartered the National Federation of Post Office Clerks. The circumstances of war would spur the creation of more government employee unions, beginning with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The government's increasing involvement in the private sector during the wartime economy meant that the long arm of the federal government had reached into almost every industry. With so many workers either directly or potentially under government employ, the bar had to be lowered to offer all workers the right to organize. According to Gompers, public employees—even the police—were workers just the same and deserved the right to unionize. Several mayors in cities around the country disagreed and implemented working improvements to dissuade, or

[39] Paul Aurich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984). When the city coffers were small and corruption rampant, the blue army could succumb to corrupt interests in the city.

[40] Joseph Slater, "Public Workers: Labor and the Boston Police Strike," *Labor History* 15 (1974): 17; Francis Russell, *A City in Terror: 1919 The Boston Police Strike* (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), 52.

gag orders to outright prevent, police from organizing. Despite these efforts, the AFL chartered thirty-seven locals of police unions, including one in Boston, during 1919 alone.[41]

Meeting at Fay Hall in the south end of the city, the Boston Police voted to turn the Boston Social Club into Boston Police Union Number 16,807 of the AFL on August 9, 1919, with Patrolman John F. McInnes serving as the union's inaugural president. The following month, the union members voted to go on strike after the city refused to meet their demands and the police commissioner suspended nineteen officers for union activity. Fay Hall, the location of this vote as well, became the headquarters of the strike, which, according to many observers, was the "climax of a year of violence." Some thought it was the fruition of labor radicalism, whereas others saw it as just a means to reform the working conditions of the Boston Police Department.[42] When the strike first began, the only indication that the police were off the beat was a rash of impromptu dice games that residents initiated in various sections of the city, although circumstances would quickly deteriorate. Crowds of people angry at the police for the roles they had played in strikes of the past, as well as those angry over specific citations, formed outside of some precincts and attacked the officers leaving the stations with mud and other projectiles.[43]

During the strike, the greatest outbreak of violence occurred at Scollay Square, an entertainment district with honky-tonks, burlesque theaters, bars, and twenty-four hour cafes, located at the intersection of eight streets just below the Pemberton Square Courthouse. Someone in a crowd of people moving from the square threw a brick into a cigar store window, heralding the beginning of rioting and looting along Court Street. The mobs mostly attacked small stores, as the big department stores such as Filene's, White's, and Chandler's had their own army of guards to protect their windows and wares. In all, eight people died and twenty-one were wounded in the melee that followed the strike. By the end of the year, the department had hired all new police officers, granting them the better wages and working conditions that the striking officers had demanded. Even though Gompers visited Boston early the next year and begged city officials to rehire some of the locked-out policemen, none of the police officers who went on strike would regain their jobs.[44] The failure of this strike had ripple effects; it severely hampered efforts to organize public workers and cemented the separation of workers in public and private sectors for the next few decades.[45]

The failure of public employee unions at this time, like those of the police, came at a curious juncture with the unionization of telephone and telegraph workers. Though private interests prior to the war had employed most of these workers, the telephone and the War Labor Board nationalized telegraph wires. Although nationalization was temporary, the employees were typically warned that any strike action would be considered next to treason. After Republican Governor Calvin Coolidge gained national attention in the 1920s by declaring that the Boston

[41] Slater, "Public Workers," 8-9, 11-13.
[42] Russell, *A City in Terror*, 78, 113.
[43] While some workers who had been at the wrong end of police billy clubs during past strikes resented the striking police officers, many unionized workers stood in solidarity with the Boston police. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers, for example, declined to sew new uniforms for the police replacements. Slater, "Public Workers," 20-23
[44] Such steps had become common as local after local disaffiliated with labor and regained lost jobs.
[45] Russell, *A City in Terror*, 133-35, 151, 170, 204, 217; Slater, "Public Workers," 8.

police had no right to strike, he became President of the United States, dominating the executive office for much of the decade and ending further debate about public employee unionism.

Professionalism as an Ideology

As workers in public and private service industries participated in the labor movements that coursed through industrial America during the late nineteenth through early twentieth century, they also participated in the rise of professionalization that swept through the world of white-collar work. Teachers, policemen, firemen, nurses, stenographers, bookkeepers, and accountants formed professional organizations in the nineteenth century to model their positions after more prestigious occupations in law, medicine, and higher education. Often the promotion of these professions introduced higher entrance requirements, formal training and education, and the pursuit of economic rewards based upon professional attributes. The professionalization project worked to create tiers within career groups; accountants gained, while bookkeepers remained at a lower tier; educational supervisors acquired status, while public school teachers' salaries stabilized; doctor-controlled hospitals, while nurses had closed career paths. Despite the fragmentation, loss of autonomy, and deskilling that occurred in these semi-professions, the ideology of professional language promised prestige and gentility. The ideology also served as a barrier against unionization and, in its earliest years, served to reinforce gender divisions and kept ethnic groups from promotions. For nurses, hospital schools of nursing encoded a "professional demeanor," which, Barbara Melosh explains, "helped nurses to defend their emotions against the shocks of hospital life." Lucy Walker, Superintendent of Nurses at the Pennsylvania Hospital, introduced a program that eliminated untrained competitors, raised standards, and established authority and limited autonomy. By 1920, the private duty nurse whose chores were just a cut above that of domestic service was replaced by a more professionalized nurse whose outlook and demeanor reflected the hierarchy of the medical profession.[46]

The professionalization of semi-professions further segmented the labor markets of white-collar employment. For example, as women transformed vocations in nursing, social work, public health, and teaching to fit concepts of craft and professionalism, the labor market closed opportunities for them in corporate offices and in the new areas of white-collar employment.

The first turning point emerged as workers resisted the heavy-handed approach of Taylorism through various alternative strategies, including trade union activity, which was not very successful. Another strategy was work culture: the ideology and practice with which workers stake out autonomous spheres of action on the job. Susan Benson explains that work culture and the relative power of female clerical workers produced an accommodation to managerial policy. This argument is useful in cases where white-collar workers were able to manipulate the situation through the presence of a client, either the hospital patient, bank account holder, student, shop floor customer, or telephone caller. In cases of extreme isolation, such as in mail

[46] Marjorie Murphy, Blackboard Unions, 2, 24-25; Barbara Melosh, "The Physician's Hand": Work Culture and Conflict in American Nursing (Philadelphia: Temple University Press) 1982. See also David Noble, America by Design: Science, Technology, and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism (New York: Oxford, 1977).

order firms, insurance companies, or accounting firms, white-collar workers' shop floor resistance by manipulating rules proved more difficult.[47]

The Romanticism of Unromantic White-Collar Work

While the WWI-era strikes that public workers and telephone operators launched are not as recognized in labor history as major industrial strikes that operated concurrently, service workers' organizing efforts marked a turning point in white-collar worker resistance. As Elizabeth Faue argues, many female union leaders looked to third party political movements and the promise of a labor party to settle accounts. Margaret Haley, whose organization had been drummed out of labor by a yellow dog contract, turned to the New Majority in Chicago, while Myrtle Cain, the head of striking telephone workers in Minneapolis, emerged as a leader in the farm labor movement.

Even job sites that were often glorified, particularly department stores, were sites of labor discontent. These beautiful "palaces" of consumption—Wanamaker's, Hecht's, Marshall Field's, Boscov's—became sites for a new kind of sales clerk, reshaped by managers and struggling for autonomy. Benson reports that managers introduced the same techniques of scientific management into the department store that were found in the offices and factory floors. Department store women had steady work—except that the two-track system involved a corps of part-timers. These part-time workers were eager to gain the higher-paying full-time positions, so there was always a reliable pool of replacement workers should a "shop girl" not measure up to management's standards. Meanwhile, welfare schemes continued to be on display: both sales clerks and telephone clerks were encouraged to vacation at company-sponsored hotels, where female journalists were also invited to participate in the benefits of welfare capitalism and presumably turn in glowing articles.

At the same time that journalists failed to provide a nuanced picture of shop girls' experiences, advertisers concocted a false picture of their copywriters' offices. Roland Marchand explains that the advertising tableau of the 1920s introduced Mr. Consumer, a visual cliché of an office worker, father, breadwinner, and employee whose window view was overlooking a series of factory plants or city skyscrapers. The implication was that this man was "master of all he surveys." Like the "palaces" of consumption, these imaginary offices obscured the work process. Such scenes did not portray real executive offices, much less "typical" offices where the majority of white-collar workers were stationed. Marchand could only find two examples where women appeared in these pictures, as secretaries and clerks aiding Mr. Consumer. "The secretary or file clerk did not need to exercise a managerial surveillance over the factory," Marchand observes. The irony of this statement should not be lost on the historian of white-collar work, because in most production-oriented industries 'surveillance over the factory' was why departments of quality control, marketing, and distribution had been created. But the imagery Marchand recovers is true to this point: "the exclusion of women from the opportunity to stand or sit by office windows helped reinforce the notion of an exclusive male prerogative to view broad

[47] Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 228-229.

horizons, to experience a sense of control over large domains, to feel like masters of all they surveyed."[48]

In fact, these imaginary masters were having difficulty with the time management systems and efficiency measures they had adopted. "Pure Taylorism…ignored the human factor," Sharon Hartman Strom writes of the development of office management ideas from 1910 to 1930, which were rigorously put to the test in life insurance companies, banks, electrical products industries, public utilities, department stores, and oil and rubber companies. Managers turned from harsher forms of scientific management to psychology to achieve management goals. Marion Bills of the Aetna Life Insurance Company tried taking the company beyond scientific management but ran into resistance from office workers. While this resistance was often passive, it still frustrated office managers, who became disillusioned with the efficiency experts.[49]

As clerical workers complained about the demoralizing effects of routine tasks, saleswomen also expressed dissatisfaction with their jobs. One secretary from Travelers Insurance in Hartford described the company as "a huge concern in which she felt like a cog in a great machine—very impersonal and routine."[50] The nature of sales work required female clerks to identify with customers' needs and demands. Sales clerks complained about the unreasonable demands of customers, but they used the discount offered by department stores to purchase the same clothing as the middle-class women they served. This, too, was part of the sales clerk work culture that emerged, a combination of what managers wanted in workers and personal characteristics. "Saleswomen could still act out their pride in their white-collar status and their vision of themselves as the arbiters of fashion and consumption," Benson argues.[51]

High turnover rates were characteristic of the most routinized white-collar jobs where women predominated. The primary reason that propelled women (and men) to quit these jobs was money: "In a labor market characterized by widely interchangeable skills and high labor turnover, changing jobs was one way in which clerical workers could strike back at an individual employer, and carve out a measure of self-determination and dignity." Despite studies to the contrary, employers believed that women quit for marriage. However, while marriage was a factor in quit rates for women, it was not an important one. At Aetna, many women left for greener employment pastures.[52] Because of high quit rates, especially among native-born clerical workers, employers looked for young clerical workers who would normally move into factory labor. The Curtis Publishing Company found that women who were not high school graduates and who were inexperienced accepted routinized work more readily. Curtis wanted women who had an economic incentive to work, who could be trained in a few days, and whose expectations for pay were at factory wage levels.[53]

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[48] Marchand, Advertising the American Dream, 238-244.
[49] Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 234-247. For instance, Aetna managers acquiesced when clerical workers resisted Marion Bills's time studies measurement and incentive plans by agreeing to ban time and motion efficiency experts and use cost accounting controls instead.
[50] Strom, Beyond the Typewriter, 246.
[51] Benson, Counter Cultures, 6.
[52] Strom, Beyond the Typewriter, 193.
[53] Strom, Beyond the Typewriter, 251-252.

All of these changes occurred during an era of heightened consumption, when both women and men turned into, and began to self-identify as, consumers. High wage packages in select industries created an image of prosperity, and new products were standardized and made affordable. Meanwhile, as the economy grew after 1920, the number of clerical workers continued to soar. Total clerical employment grew from 1.6 million in 1920 to 12.6 million in 1970. At the same time the female share of clerical jobs rose from 47 percent to 75 percent. The selling floor in department stores and other merchandising establishments also grew at astonishing rates—total employment in retail trade increased from 4.5 million to 11.1 million between 1920 and 1970. Women employed in retail trades grew from 0.7 million to 5.1 million in the same years, accounting for two-thirds of the hiring in retail trade, an increase of 15.5 percent of the market to 45.9 percent.[54] However, as much as these numbers reveal a vast increase in employment options, not everyone was able to partake in the consumer economy or have a seat at the table of service work.

Race and Service Work in the 1920s

Prejudicial attitudes restricted many first- and second-generation Americans from entering the world of service work, particularly in the private sector, from the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries. Discriminatory hiring practices, however, especially curtailed opportunities for African American workers. Some African Americans responded to the inability to find work in white-owned businesses by establishing businesses of their own, many of which catered to an African American clientele. Another key avenue for African American service workers was becoming a porter or maid for the Pullman Sleeping Car Company, for the company primarily hired African Americans for these positions. With over 10,000 porters and 200 maids, the Pullman Company had become the single largest employer of African Americans by 1926. Porters and maids suffered long hours and low wages. Female maids were paid less and had more arduous jobs than their male counterparts, for there was one maid per train to serve all female passengers (and their children), whereas the company assigned a porter to each sleeping car. Both porters and maids were expected to furnish their own uniforms and pay for their own lodging and expenses. Maids also supplied their own tools to provide manicures and paid for their own training in the techniques of manicuring—a requirement for the job—if they lacked prior experience.

Even though their wages were greater than those of sharecroppers or domestic workers—two other labor categories that had a high percentage of African American workers—they were still far below what the US Department of Labor deemed necessary to sustain a family. The Pullman Company reasoned that the porters and maids made up the difference in tips; these, however, were typically paltry, especially for maids. Furthermore, the need to solicit tips degraded the work that maids and porters did and forced them to adopt a pleasing persona in the hope of garnering greater tips. The degradation was exacerbated by the fact that passengers routinely

[54] Edwards, *Segmented Work*, 206-207.

referred to the porters as "George," as though they were all George Pullman's "boys." To correct this and regain their dignity, porters posted signs with their names at the front of each car.[55]

Organizing efforts among Pullman porters began in 1909. The Pullman Company responded by enacting policies of welfare capitalism and establishing a company union and benefit association to discourage the formation of an external union. Porters, however, resumed their unionizing efforts in 1925. A group of more militant porters from New York City decided that the most effective strategy was to secure a leader who did not work as a porter, and thus would not face the threat of losing his job should the company retaliate against the organizers. A. Philip Randolph, a socialist and seasoned civil rights and labor activist, accepted the call to serve as the chief organizer for the porters' union. Lucille Green, his wife and a small business owner in her own right, supported Randolph's efforts through her Harlem beauty shop. On August 25, 1925, over five hundred porters met in New York City and launched the new Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) with A. Philip Randolph as their elected leader. With financial help from the Garland Fund, the Brotherhood hired several organizers, established headquarters at 238 West 136th Street, and channeled funds into Randolph's newspaper, *The Messenger*, which became the media outlet for the fledgling union.

Although it started in New York City, the BSCP established locals throughout the country in cities that served as major railroad hubs. As the terminus for the transcontinental railroad and a place where many porters made their homes, Oakland, California, became another center of organizing activity for the union. When Randolph gave a speech at the Parks Chapel Church in Oakland, many Californians joined the new union and local activists "Dad" Moore, a retired porter, and C. L. Dellums, a current porter, became the chief organizers in the area. When the Company tried to break the union in 1928, they especially targeted workers in Oakland, a union stronghold. Yet the Brotherhood persevered and became affiliated with the AFL in 1929. Although it was a predominantly African American union, the BSCP was open to all porters and maids and included Filipino and Mexican porters as well as Chinese maids, the only other ethnic groups represented in the field.[56]

From the very beginning of the BSCP, women played a key role. Historian Melinda Chateauvert writes that women "knocked on doors, collected union dues, addressed mass meetings, and argued over members' unfair discharge claims with Pullman management." The International Ladies Auxiliary Order to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the union for maids, was the first organization of African American women that achieved representation in a railway brotherhood union. These women, along with the wives of BSCP members who were organized into Women's Economic Councils, played a central role in the organization of the first African American union to gain official recognition by a major corporation in the United States. At the same time, however, women in the Auxiliary had to fight to force the BSCP to take their concerns into account. Some male members also dismissed the necessity of maintaining the

[55] Robert L. Allen, *The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters: C. L. Dellums and the Fight for Fair Treatment and Civil Rights* (Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 2014), 24-25; Melinda Chateauvert, *Marching Together: Women of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 27.

[56] Allen, The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 29, 35.

Women's Economic Councils, although Randolph consistently maintained that the union needed to sustain the support of Porters' wives in order to secure a strong membership.[57]

The Depression

For many educated African American men, working as a Pullman Porter was one of the only options available for white-collar service work. However, activists would soon challenge the economic limitations that a majority of African Americans faced in cities around the country, specifically by demanding greater job opportunities in service work in private businesses. One of the first challenges came from an organization called the New Negro Alliance (NNA) of Washington, DC. In its demands for greater opportunities for African Americans in the service industry, the NNA was not only one of the earliest grassroots organizations to use economic means to fight for civil rights and social change, but also one of the first groups to employ a direct action technique that would become a hallmark for civil rights groups in the urban North during the 1950s and 1960s.

The NNA began late in the summer of 1933, after The Hamburger Grill, a White-owned business in the predominantly African American neighborhood of 12th and U Street, fired three African American workers and hired White workers to take their places. In response, twenty-one-year-old John Aubrey Davis organized neighborhood men to picket the business holding signs encouraging other residents to boycott the restaurant. The first battle was soon won, and the Grill rehired the recently dismissed workers. The success prompted Davis to organize the alliance along with Belford V. Lawson, an attorney, and M. Franklin Thorne; all three men came from the African American upper-middle class of Washington, DC. They initially formed the alliance at Lawson's law office, located at 1232 U Street NW, with the sole purpose of advancing African Americans' earning capacity through greater economic opportunities, particularly in the white-collar and private service industry. Their efforts included calling on local newspapers to hire African American newspaper boys, securing staff and managerial positions at a local A&P grocery store, and pushing for the hiring of African Americans in various positions in groceries and restaurants.

Their protests occurred during the height of the Depression, an economic crisis that especially hurt African Americans because of the longstanding "last-hired, first-fired" treatment that they often received in the service and industrial sectors. Even the initial Federal programs designed to alleviate joblessness, such as the Civil Works Administration, employed significantly fewer African American workers in their DC office. The "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" protests emerged out of "Jobs for Negroes," a direct-action movement designed to increase the hiring of African American workers. Activists used such tactics as negotiation, boycotts, and large-scale public protests to get White-owned businesses in African American neighborhoods to employ African American clerks and managers. The first of these direct-action campaigns took place in Chicago in 1929, and they quickly spread around the country, occurring in over thirty-five cities.

Groups like the NNA that emerged from these economic protests focused on securing jobs for African Americans in non-menial service positions. In addition to employing direct action

[57] Chateauvert, *Marching Together*, 2-3, 7, 36. For information on the BSCP during its later years, particularly during the Depression, see the chapter on Transportation Labor in this study.

techniques, NNA members also lobbied for a civil rights bill from 1935 to 1939. They even fought against an injunction preventing activists from picketing stores where they did not work, a legal battle that they brought before the Supreme Court on March 5, 1938, in the case *New Negro Alliance v. Sanitary Grocery Company, Inc*. In a 6-2 decision, the Court sided in favor of the NNA and declared that those with a direct or even indirect interest in employment practices had the right to "disseminate information" and persuade others to act against these practices. This inspired a boom in "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaigns around the country.[58] Reverend John H. Johnson of the St. Martin's Protestant Episcopal Church led a notable campaign in New York City. He and other citizens formed the Citizens League for Fair Pay after White business owners in Harlem refused to negotiate with the activists; their first action was establishing picket lines around Blumstein's Department Store and publishing pictures of residents who crossed the picket line in the *New York Age,* an African American newspaper. After six weeks of protest, the storeowners agreed to hire African Americans in clerical and other professional positions.[59]

Another key city for protests of this kind was Baltimore, Maryland. The Baltimore jobs boycott of 1933-34 drew support from African American institutions, community groups, and other sources of local support and inspiration. The boycott's first victories were won under the leadership of an "enigmatic" spiritual revivalist named Prophet Kiowa Costonie. Shortly after he arrived in Baltimore, Costonie began to investigate the employment practices and policies of White-owned businesses that operated on Pennsylvania Avenue, the commercial center of an African American neighborhood in Northwest Baltimore. Even though almost the entire clientele along the commercial strip of Pennsylvania Avenue was African American, the *Afro-American* newspaper reported in 1931 that White-owned clothing stores outnumbered Black-owned stores by seven to one, and White-owned eateries were double the number of Black ones; African Americans did not own any of the hardware stores. The boycott was almost avoided when businesses, including two five-and-dime stores, a shoe store, cleaners, and an A&P store agreed to hire African American clerks. The owner of the local shoe store, Max Meyers, announced the change in his store's hiring practices during a mass meeting of over 450 people held at the Perkins Square Baptist Church. Yet many other storeowners refused to negotiate with the activists and the boycott proceeded as planned.

The organization responsible for sustaining the jobs boycott movement in Baltimore was the City-Wide Young People's Forum, which a group of African American high school and college students had established in 1931. The organization's original focus was on community education, and their Friday night meetings drew crowds of upwards of 2,000 people to hear speakers such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Walter White, and James Weldon Johnson. The Forum first held its meetings at the Sharp Street Church but relocated to the auditorium at the Bethel AME church to accommodate the growing crowds. Even before the jobs boycott that Costonie led, the Forum had engaged in a similar effort to secure greater employment for African Americans in libraries, public schools, and social work. The Forum ensured that any jobs effort would aim to help women as well as men, and the boycott began with the demand that stores hire "salesgirls." This

[58] Michele F. Pacifico, "'Don't Buy Where You Can't Work': The New Negro Alliance of Washington" *Washington History* 6, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1994): 67-68, 70, 72-74, 77.

[59] Joe William Trotter, Jr. "From a Raw Deal to a New Deal?" in *To Make Our World Anew: A History of African Americans,* eds. Robin D. G. Kelley and Earl Lewis, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 429.

inclusion of women reflected the leadership as well as the rank-and-file of the Forum, for women constituted a high percentage of both. Two key organizers of the boycott were Lillie Jackson and her daughter Juanita Jackson; Juanita was instrumental in forming the Forum. Furthermore, a major partner to the Forum was the Baltimore Housewives' League, which counted over 2,000 African American women as members.

The boycott of 1933 took place on the 1700 block, a single block on Pennsylvania Avenue. Leaders chose to take a focused approach in order to "maximize the effect of the threatened picket line." When storeowners refused to alter their hiring practices, the boycott officially began on Friday, December 8, the beginning of the Christmas shopping season. The picket lines commenced at nine in the morning; by each weekday afternoon, the number of demonstrators ballooned as children joined the lines after local schools let out for the day. Black-owned drug stores and restaurants supplied food and other aid to the demonstrators, local citizens established two food stations, and three physicians were on standby should the demonstrators require assistance. The *Afro-American* publicized the campaign on its pages and the community staged mass meetings at the Cosmopolitan Community Church located at 1112 Madison Avenue to sustain morale. When the boycott began to have a noticeable effect on business, White storeowners sought and received an injunction against the demonstrators, which went into effect on the 15th and effectively ended the boycott. This, however, was not the end of the Baltimore activists' efforts to improve African Americans' employment options in white-collar work. The Forum launched a successful campaign to establish an evening 'training course in salesmanship' at Frederick Douglass High School, an African American school, in February of 1934. On the first night, eighty-five students enrolled in the course.[60]

Although many of the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" pickets achieved limited success, these efforts served as a precursor to A. Philip Randolph's planned March on Washington in 1941 to protest racist practices in the military and defense industry, an action that forced the Roosevelt Administration to address the problem of racially based economic disparity. To tackle the problem of discriminatory hiring practice—and to thwart the march—President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 on June 25, 1941, which, in addition to banning racial discrimination in companies that received federal defense contracts, established the Fair Employment Practices Committee to investigate racially discriminatory hiring practices. Indeed, African American residents of Baltimore, and cities like it, would not see substantial improvement in opportunities for white-collar work as clerks, bus drivers, police, fire, and skilled blue-collar work until World War II.[61]

[60] Andor Skotnes, "'Buy Where You Can Work': Boycotting for Jobs in African-American Baltimore, 1933-1934," *Journal of Social History*, vol. 27, no. 4 (Summer 1994), 736, 740, 742, 745, 747-48, 751; Karen Olson, "Old West Baltimore: Segregation, African-American Culture, and the Struggle for Equality," *Baltimore Book*, 69.

[61] Pacifico, "'Don't Buy Where You Can't Work,'" 70, 85; Olson, "Old West Baltimore," 61.





(L) ***Folk singer Pete Seeger entertaining at the opening of the United Federal Labor Washington Canteen, sponsored by the Federal Workers of American, Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO); first lady Eleanor Roosevelt is seated in center of audience, Washington, DC, 1944*** *(Joseph Anthony Horne, LC P&P, FSA/OWI)* *(R)* ***Ella Watson, government charwoman who provides for a family of six on her salary of $180 per year. She has been a federal employee for twenty-six years, Washington, DC, 1942*** *(Gordon Parks, LC P&P, FSA/OWI)*

The Public Sector in the Depression

Historians of the Depression era have largely neglected to examine the effects of the economic crisis on white-collar workers in public service jobs, regardless of race. This neglect arises in part from misconceptions about public work during this time. The majority of public workers did not have high wages, they did not keep their jobs, and they did not survive the Depression unscathed. Although the New Deal created many public works jobs, most assistance helped local governments continue public service, i.e. pay salaries for police, firemen, and teachers. Often public workers' salaries were cut 10-30 percent, and local governments laid-off many workers and shortened the workweek to four days. Workers paid in scrip or not paid at all had their back wages returned by Reconstruction Finance Loans to banks and local governments, which kept the 10-25 percent wage-cut instituted before the loans. Works Progress Administration (WPA) money for salaries for social workers, teachers, health authorities, and basic fire and police service became available to governments on the brink of bankruptcy. States passed laws that barred married women from public employment regardless of family circumstances.

Public workers never regained wage losses after World War I inflation. During the 1920s, cities were collecting enough taxes, although corruption was rampant. Teachers continued to protest wages, and government unions pursued meager grievance procedures, while organized labor was kept at a distance. The collapse of tax receipts in the 1930s spelled disaster for most of these workers. Many cities were at the edge of bankruptcy, borrowing from banks and large insurance firms to make payroll. As high unemployment characterized the private sector, low wages, 10-25 percent wage cuts, and four-day workweeks became the norm in the public work force.

Chicago public school teachers again took the lead in 1933. Teachers directed their wrath at the banks, whose stringent measures were responsible for the devaluation of pay and the use of scrip

for wages. Scrip became more common for public workers as some cities like Fall River, Massachusetts, declared bankruptcy and stopped all payments. In Arkansas, nearly two-thirds of the public schools were closed in the early years of the Depression and only opened again when the WPA sent aid to rehire teachers. Public workers in nearly every city experienced cuts in wages, and their protests were heard in rallies and school board offices throughout the country. At the federal level, it was thought that more jobs could be had if work for federal employees was reduced. The four-day workweek became the norm in post offices. A campaign against married female teachers became fierce in the education sector, where many continued teaching even after marriage. Old school board rules were resurrected, and married female teachers were fired in Cincinnati and threatened in several other cities. The public high schools and junior colleges filled with unemployed, who used schoolrooms and libraries as refuge from the cold.[62]



Female employees of Woolworth's striking for a 40-hour work week, 1937 *(LOC P&P, New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper collection)*

White-Collar Work and Unionism in the Depression

No sector of the economy was spared from the ravages of un- and underemployment during the depression. In the world of private service work, many advertising giants either folded or cut back severely on their staff. N.W. Ayers, one of the biggest, spread work by instituting the four-day workweek and an additional cut in pay. All welfare work disappeared. There were no vacations, job shifts, double workloads, longer hours, or more services for customers. In February 1932, one of the twenty largest agencies, Kenyon and Eckhardt, imposed a 10 percent levy on salaries for an agency reserve fund, and two months later added another ten percent.

[62] Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 131-149.

Layoffs were common, but companies tried to hold on to experienced copywriters; Erwin and Wase, for instance, cut wages by half after drastic layoffs. Lord and Thomas employees lived on similar pay cuts, and some were dismissed.[63] In department stores the number of part-timers soared. In one estimate, the number of part-timers increased from 8 to 20 percent of the workforce, while at some stores the full-time staff was cut by one-third. In Boston, saleswomen were more likely to be out of work than most female workers, but in other areas of the country saleswomen were able to keep their jobs, albeit with severe wage cuts and longer hours.

Layoffs proved still more severe in the phone companies. Bell System employment fell from 454,500 in 1929 to 270,500 by 1933. Married women were laid off, taking their lead from half of the school boards in the country and most of the federal government. Four-day workweeks and wage and benefits cuts proved normal. The only concessions to its former welfare capitalism plan were the incentive plan of dividend stock and the company union.

Unlike those in the manufacturing sector, white-collar service workers did not experience a surge in unionism, although some public employee unions, like those for teachers and postal workers, experienced growth. The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) formed in 1935. Although primarily a union for white-collar workers in the private sector at its inception, it did not bar public workers and eventually represented all public workers at the local level, including maintenance men, nurses, health workers, and sanitation workers. The union initially focused on supporting Civil Service laws at the state level and opposing patronage. After it became affiliated with the AFL, the union adopted the methods of craft-based unionization favored by AFL President William Green. Green demanded that public employee unions adopt a no-strike clause in their charters in compliance with a rule that he thought Samuel Gompers had instituted in response to the policemen's strike of 1919, even though the AFL had not in fact passed such a rule. Green was also responsible for keeping the organization of public workers on the state and local level separate from that of federal workers, but, at the time that the AFSCME organized, Green had bigger concerns. John L. Lewis's split with Green and the AFL overshadowed the quiet negotiations of public workers, but the move had a dramatic impact on these new unions. When the CIO separated from the AFL in 1935, both the AFSCME and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) had difficulty retaining members, who were leaving to join Lewis. The openness of the new movement, its community aspect, and its left-wing orientation appealed to public workers. In 1938, the first public employee strikes occurred through WPA locals affiliated with the AFT. These new locals and their members were looked upon as the radical fringe in their own unions, but these workers verbalized and exemplified much of the sentiment within public unions at the time. By staying within the AFL, the public employee unions remained in the most conservative wing of the labor movement, but they were constrained by the importance of local union affiliation with state and municipal labor federations whose political lobbyists were crucial to union survival.[64]

In the private sector, Samuel Gompers issued a handful of federal charters to small locals of office workers and stenographers in Indianapolis, New York, and Washington, DC. The first

[63] Marchand, Advertising the American Dream, 287.

[64] Leo Kramer, Labor's Paradox: The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO (New York: John Wiley, 1962), 2-30; Joseph C. Gouldin, Jerry Wurf: Labor's Last Angry Man (New York: Atheneum, 1982).

union of private sector white-collar workers was established in 1934 under the Office Workers' Federal Labor Union, 19708 of Toledo consisting of Toledo Edison Company clerical workers. Between 1934 and 1937 several hundred office workers' locals affiliated, but neither William Green nor AFL Secretary George Meany offered encouragement. They looked at these locals as organizations of communists whose work was to interrupt the business of AFL unions; protestations by the white-collar union leadership to the contrary proved fruitless.

When the CIO began office work organizing in 1938 and radical WPA strikers caught the attention of office workers the same year, the AFL executive council became friendlier to white-collar workers. The first successful white-collar office strike took place in 1934 at the Macaulay Publishing Company, in New York. Other white-collar strikes occurred in conjunction with industrial walkouts. In 1936, female office workers joined striking warehousemen at Gimbels in Philadelphia. In Bayonne, New Jersey, thirty-three office workers at the Maidenform Brassiere Company maintained a successful picket line that 1,000 factory operatives refused to cross. The union was small and even inconsequential in the CIO's eyes, but it maintained a radical stance and continued organizing drives after the war from 1946 to 1948. The federal unions in the AFL labored under President Green's resistance. The Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) was not organized until 1945 after years of petitions to the AFL convention for affiliation.[65]

During the Depression, neither the AFL nor the CIO would come near the phone workers who participated in telephone company unions (also known as "associations" or "employee representative plans"). Such unions were declared illegal in the Wagner Act of 1935, which prohibited employers from maintaining company unions. However, it was not until 1937, when the Supreme Court upheld the Act, that the telephone companies granted autonomy to their former associations, and the character of bargaining changed for the unions. Even then, unions did not affiliate with labor and resisted any incursions from the AFL or the CIO because the organizations were still tied to the original concepts defined by the company ideology.[66]

[65] Sharon Hartman Strom, "'We're No Kitty Foyles': Organizing Office Workers for the CIO, 1937-50," in *Women, Work and Protest*, ed. Ruth Milkman (Boston: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1985), 206-234. See also Joseph E. Finley, *White Collar Union: The Story of the OPEIU and Its People* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), 3-16.

[66] Schacht, The Making of Telephone Unionism, 46-53.



Actors' strike, New York, NY, 1919 *(NYPL, Billy Rose Theater Collection)*

White-Collar Workers in the Culture Industry

During the 1930s, as these examples illustrate, labor activism in the United States experienced a renaissance. While historians primarily point to the formation of the CIO, the Wagner Act, and President Roosevelt's support for unions as evidence, the resurgence of support for organized labor was also rooted in a profound cultural shift. Historian Michael Denning argues that the Depression era was marked by the "laboring of American culture": themes of labor entered art, popular culture, and rhetoric; members of the working-class became artists depicting their experiences; and artists became laborers, albeit ones with white collars. Denning explains, "Culture had become an industry in the early twentieth century, and artists, musicians, and writers were laborers in that industry." Perhaps this artist-turned-laborer phenomenon was best illustrated by the Disney cartoonists' strike of 1941.[67]

By 1940, after the wild success of *Snow White*, Disney Studios had become the preeminent studio for animated cartoons. Disney Studios' ascent in popularity was mirrored by its growth as a company. In 1935, Disney counted two hundred employees; by 1940 that number had grown to 1100. To accommodate the company's expansion, the studios moved from their old location at 2719 Hyperion Avenue in Los Angeles to a new, larger, and more technologically-advanced headquarters in Burbank, California. The company was well on its way to cementing its place on the American cultural landscape.

[67] Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1997), xvii.

Conditions for workers at the Disney Studios, however, were not as rosy. Film industry cartoonists had attempted to unionize during the 1930s but achieved limited success. Initially, Disney cartoonists did not participate in these efforts because of an entrenched sentiment of superiority. Disney animators were the crème de la crème of the cartoon world—they were the most highly-trained (learning the techniques in the Disney-owned art school) and had access to the best facilities in the business. At the same time, their working conditions were far from ideal—wages were poor and pay scales were not systematized; they worked long hours and received no additional compensation for overtime work; and they did not receive screen credits for their work on full-length features. Women who worked as inkers and painters were physically separated from the male cartoonists in a different building and received below subsistence wages. The move to a massive studio served to exacerbate the compartmentalization of labor, drawing the cartoonists further into the world of bureaucratized white-collar work.





(L) ***Flier from Cartoonists strike at Disney Studios, July 11, 1941*** *(California State University Northridge. University Library, Special Collections & Archives, Urban Archives, Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Guild, Local 839 Collection); (R)* ***Striking cartoonists picketing at Disney Studios, 1941****(Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection, Los Angeles Herald Examiner Collection)*

During the fall of 1940, the Screen Cartoonists Guild turned its attention to organizing Disney cartoonists. Appealing to the National Labor Relations Board to recognize the Disney unit in 1941, they declared that Disney had engaged in unfair labor practices "for fostering a company union." Relations between Disney and his cartoonists further soured when he summarily fired twenty-four cartoonists for union activities—an action that directly precipitated the strike. For nine weeks, beginning May 29, workers picketed in front of the Disney Studios, sometimes receiving support from their counterparts at Warner Brothers—Disney's rival. The cartoonists imbued the strike with an artistic flare. In one case they created a massive dragon stretching over three to four blocks featuring Disney's face on the dragon's head—a reference to the Disney animated film *The Reluctant Dragon*. Demonstrators also picketed in front of theaters showing Disney shorts in Los Angeles and other cities. The strike came to a close when both sides agreed to a settlement in Washington, DC. The settlement actually benefitted the cartoonists: the fired cartoonists were reemployed, pay scales were stabilized, and workers received severance pay and

a grievance clause. Furthermore, the cartoonists were officially organized under the auspices of the Screen Cartoonists Guild.[68]

The Disney cartoonists launched their organizing efforts on the eve of America's entry into World War II. While the flood of new jobs helped many Americans, women in office and telephone work benefited most from the wartime economic boom. Pay differentials, shorter hours, and gentility of office work retained women, but openings for higher-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector meant that throughout the war there were shortages in clerical work. Stability was another important draw for clerical workers. The Office of War Information predicted that nurses, teachers, and clerical workers would be needed after the war, and advertisers took advantage. One ad for Smith Corona shows a woman turning in her metal manufacturing company button with a typewriter waiting for her handily in the wings. The War Advertising Council jumped at the opportunity to promote women in war work. The *Saturday Evening Post*, Curtis Publishing Company's flagship magazine, seemed to lead the enthusiasm for wartime advertising by running many advertisements with no product pitch, but rather a message to get behind the war effort. The *Post* fiction stories portrayed female war workers as anxious to get back to secretarial jobs or to start families.

Not since the early days of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933, which guaranteed the right of labor to independent organization, had businesses in industries been summoned by government to contribute to wartime production. Managerial procedures and controls limited to integrated industries spread to smaller firms, where forecasting, accounting, and inventory control took on new forms and new ideas about flexibility and growth. New technologies, plastics, artificial fibers, and metal alloys, as well as the systematic application of science to production, encouraged managerial development. As speed and volume increased, so did the need for managers.

The Post-War Era

In 1951, C. Wright Mills observed that white-collar workers had become part of an impersonal, hierarchical work world where the structure of the workplace, the modern skyscraper, bore a resemblance to the site of production—inside the vertical file. Mills wrote, "As skyscrapers replace rows of small shops, so offices replace free markets. Each office within the skyscraper is a segment of the enormous file, a part of the symbol factory that produces the billion slips of paper that gear modern society into its daily shape. From the executive's suite to the factory yard, the paper webwork is spun."[69] Within this web, William Whyte discovered, was the Organization Man, not workers or white-collar people, "in the clerk sense of the word," but middle managers who "take the vows of organizational life, and it is they who are the mind and soul of our great self-perpetuating institutions."[70]

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[68] Denning, *The Cultural Front*, 403-412. While the cartoonists won this battle, an embittered Walt Disney turned his efforts to fighting radical labor during the postwar years, becoming one of the most notable "friendly witnesses" of the red scare.

[69] C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 189.

[70] William H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), 3.

The Unionization of Public Workers

Despite this assessment of the new order of white-collar work, workers still existed, and they continued to agitate for better working conditions. For example, in 1960 New York City schoolteachers launched their first one-day strike since the 1940s, and there was not a single arrest. Strikes such as this ushered in a new era of public employee strikes.[71]

Circumstances during the 1950s were not conducive to this kind of action. Public employees labored under stringent anti-strike legislation. In 1946-1947, public workers accounted for most of the strikers in the biggest strike wave in the nation's history. Suffering under inflation, public workers abandoned their reluctance to strike and formed picket lines. Teachers, whose union was older, larger, and more secure, dominated the public employee strikes of 1947. A walkout in Buffalo, New York, led to a general strike in the city. In reaction, New York legislators passed a no strike law for public workers and prohibited striking teachers from being rehired in the state. It was the toughest law in the country and stood as a challenge to public workers.[72]

Public workers in other parts of the country were organizing into unions despite a conservative shift in the political winds. In 1949, the United Public Workers, an organization of progressive and leftwing public workers, came under the scrutiny of the House Un-American Activities Committee and the McCarran Committee, which held hearings in urban centers. Local organizations like the American Legion and the Daughters of the American Revolution volunteered to keep records on the activities of unions. Membership lists from organizations designated as subversive by the Justice Department were matched with public workers' names on index cards, then turned over to civil service boards or the boards of education. Many workers quit when their names appeared in public, while others refused to join unions to save their careers.[73]

United Public Workers (UPW) had been part of the fledging American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) until 1937, when it split from the organization and joined the growing CIO. Public workers agonized over affiliation with the CIO. Few joined, because they were politically attached to their central labor organizations, and, in the absence of formal mechanisms of collective bargaining and the right to strike, these central labor boards offered political leverage. Even the Wagner Act and the National Labor Relations Board had next to nothing to offer white-collar and urban employees. Public workers were excluded from the law. After the war, the unionization of public workers proceeded slowly as policemen, firemen, teachers, hospital workers, and city workers made deals with respective city negotiators.

The 1956 merger of the AFL and CIO gave public sector workers the resources to organize. Walter Reuther, head of the United Automobile Workers, insisted on taking funds from the CIO and devoting them to an Industrial Unionizing Department. These funds and new leaders, like Dave Selden and Albert Shanker in the AFT and Jerry Wurf in AFSCME, gave the unions a shot in the arm. Other unions, like the Transit Workers Union in New York City, led by Mike Quill,

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[71] Mark H. Maier, *City Unions: Managing Discontent in New York City* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1987) 47-76.

[72] Maier, *City Unions*, 82; Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 175-195.

[73] Ellen Schrecher, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism in the Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Murphy, *Blackboard Unions*, 184-186.

negotiated new contracts after a series of wildcat strikes. These short work stoppages proved successful, and, because they were short-lived and not sanctioned, they skirted the anti-strike laws and protected union leadership.

By the 1960s, public workers' open defiance of anti-strike legislation, the collapse of the red scare, and the aggressive organizing efforts of the new union leadership led to strikes in urban areas throughout the country. Workers formerly part of professional organizations openly supported unionism and adopted militant actions to force collective bargaining. In 1962, 20,000 teachers struck in New York City. In 1968, 35,000 public school teachers in the education association tendered mass resignation in the Tangerine Bowl in Tampa to force the Florida legislature to increase wages.



Striking members of AFSCME (American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees) Memphis Local 1733 hold signs with slogan that symbolized the sanitation workers' 1968 campaign Memphis, TN *(copyright by Richard L Copley, used with permission)*

Civil Rights, Economic Rights, and Workers' Rights

During this strike wave of the 1960s, some forms of labor activism were closely intertwined with civil rights activism, especially in the South. The Jim Crow system of segregation that continued to dominate the South during the post-war era proved resistant to the biracial unionism of the CIO and the new unionism of white-collar workers. Nevertheless, union after union demanded the end of segregated locals, and in the South this insistence brought more integrated voluntary associations into cities. These "mixed" unions gave a reputation for radicalism to the labor movement in the region, as they had when integrated unions first made inroads in the South during the 1930s. In the immediate post-war era, it was difficult for unions to make big gains. African Americans who participated in the CIO drives of the 1930s and experienced the disappointment of attempts within the unions to re-segregate locals or avoid confronting Jim

Crow laws had no illusions about the power of working people to unite against economic injustice.

At the same time, civil right activists, particularly young activists of the 1960s, began to turn their attention to economic concerns. In the South, these activities were manifested in the Freedom Schools that Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) members established in Mississippi and in the Economic Research and Action Program that members of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) organized in northern cities. One activity that resumed in northern cities during this period of heightened civil rights activism was the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" protest. Civil rights groups such as the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) particularly favored consumer boycotts and other forms of direct action such as store pickets to once again raise awareness and increase jobs for African Americans in the service economy. One of the earliest demonstrations of this era occurred during the summer of 1959 when young activists boycotted Brandt's Liquor Store on 145th Street in Harlem, demanding the hiring of African American salesmen. These activists argued that since Harlem was a predominantly African American neighborhood, the store should hire African American salesmen at their Harlem location.[74] The following year, ministers in Philadelphia organized a general "Don't Buy" campaign that involved almost 200,000 African American participants. CORE members even used this tactic during the 1964 World's Fair. On April 22, 1964, James Farmer, along with 300 activists, faced arrests for protesting employment discrimination in front of the many Schafer Beer and Ford Motor Company pavilions. Again, these new efforts focused on securing white-collar service jobs or higher wage blue-collar positions for African American workers. However, the demands did fall along gender lines, and activists did not push for women to be hired in traditionally male-dominated work.[75] In the South, perhaps the most notable effort that combined demands for civil rights and economic justice, as well as the unionization of municipal employees, was the Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike of 1968.

Sanitation work in Memphis had long been racially segregated, with African Americans receiving unequal treatment; White workers had privileges that African American workers were continually denied. The 1964 Civil Rights Act addressed the issue of job discrimination, but the Memphis City Council never questioned de facto racist practices in city government. That the majority of African Americans remained in poverty in the Memphis area served as evidence that the CIO's promise of economic justice had not reached all areas of the country.

Although the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during the sanitation workers' strike in 1968 made this event national news, this was not the first time that sanitation workers in Memphis had attempted to unionize to fight for improved conditions. T. O. Jones, an activist and sanitation worker, had staged a walkout of thirty-two workers in 1963. In January of the following year, he established an Independent Workers Association that became affiliated with AFSCME as Local 1733. Sanitation workers again proposed a strike in 1966, before a court injunction prohibited all city employees from striking "for any purpose whatsoever." Afterward, conditions continued to deteriorate for the majority Black male workforce. Certain factors that

[74] Stacy Kinlock Sewell, "The 'Not-Buying Power' of the Black Community: Urban Boycotts and Equal Employment Opportunity, 1960-1964," *The Journal of African American History* 89, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 136. Many civil rights leaders disagreed with the group's demand for the hiring of African American workers in an African American neighborhood, viewing this as a perverse form of segregation.

[75] Sewell, "The 'Not-Buying Power' of the Black Community," 139-40, 142, 144.

directly contributed to the eventual walkout included the election of a White conservative mayor, the Public Works Department's policy of sending African American workers home without full pay on rainy days, and the deaths of Robert Walker and Echol Cole, two sanitation workers who sought refuge in a garbage truck during a rainstorm and became trapped in the truck's grinder in February 1968.[76]

At a mass meeting on the night of February 11, 1968, sanitation workers decided to call a wildcat strike for higher wages and better working conditions. The following day, over 1,100 public works employees in Memphis did not appear for work. Most of the more militant advocates were older men on the job, and their dedication garnered the support of AFSCME and civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and James Lawson, further illustrating the interconnections between labor and civil rights activism. Bill Lucy, an AFSCME field representative designed the sign that would become the iconic symbol for the strikers' plight: "I AM A MAN." On the night of March 18, King spoke to a crowd of 15,000 that had gathered at the Mason Temple in Memphis, a Church of God in Christ church on Mason Street, during which he posed the question, "What does it profit a man to be able to eat at an integrated lunch counter if he doesn't earn enough money to buy a hamburger and a cup of coffee?" [77]

King was to lead a march on March 28 from Clayborn Temple to City Hall, but an outbreak of violence cut the demonstration short.[78] Although the violence unnerved King, he vowed to return to Memphis to lead a peaceful strike, which he did in early April. After speaking to the demonstrators and striking workers, he was assassinated on April 4, before he could carry out a renewed effort. The sanitation workers sustained the strike even after King's death, even using the assassination as a "badge" to sustain their efforts. Soon, the mayor and the rest of the city could not disconnect the strike from King's assassination. Eventually, the federal government became involved when President Johnson sent Undersecretary of Labor James Reynolds to Memphis to settle the strike. On April 16, the two sides reached an agreement in which the workers agreed to end the strike and the city recognized the sanitation workers' union.[79]

The sanitation workers' appeal to social and economic justice attracted Jerry Wurf, the AFSCME organizer who, in the early years of the civil rights movement, brought his union rank and file to many rallies organized by CORE. This strike was a clear merger of civil rights demands and urban African American workers looking to unions to serve White and Black members equally. As African Americans rose in the ranks of trade union leadership, they used their new political power to influence city hall and Congress.[80]

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[76] During a rainy day that January, city supervisors sent African American workers home with half pay while allowing white workers to remain on the job earning a full day's wages.

[77] Jason Sokol, "Dynamics of Leadership and the Memphis Sanitation Strike of 1968," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 258-60, 263, 266.

[78] Clayborn Temple, originally constructed in 1891 on the corner of Hernando and Pontotoc as a Second Presbyterian church, became an African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1945. Throughout the strike, Clayborn Temple served as a center for organizing activity and as a refuge during the riot on March 28th.

[79] Sokol, "Dynamics of Leadership and the Memphis Sanitation Strike of 1968," 275, 278-79; Timothy Huebner and Benjamin Houston, "Campus, Community, and Civil Rights: Remembering Memphis and Southwestern in 1968," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 72, 82 n. 5.

[80] Michael K. Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993), 9-10.

Labor rights and civil rights intersected in various ways throughout the South and beyond. Las Vegas had become a "northern" destination for African Americans of the Great Migration, particularly for migrants from Louisiana and Arkansas. Job opportunities as hotel maids were especially attractive to Black women whose job options in the South were primarily restricted to sharecropping or domestic work. Furthermore, these jobs offered greater protection for workers because the city's strip was a closed shop; all gambling hotels and casinos were unionized under the integrated Hotel and Culinary Workers Union (HCWU), Local 226. Chartered in 1938, the union was led by Al Bramlet, a White man, and Sarah Hughes, a Black woman. In addition to leading the integrated local, Bramlet also acted as a labor recruiter, traveling to northern cities and small southern towns to attract new labor for the city's growing hospitality industry.[81]

According to Annelise Orleck, the union gave Black workers a degree of job security, medical benefits, and a foundational political education. "The union," Orleck explains, gave Black female members "a sense of belonging, a solid wage, and their first exercise of citizenship rights that most Americans took for granted." Furthermore, as with other unions like the Food Tobacco and Allied Workers, HCWU provided opportunities for Black women to rise up the ranks of union leadership. The union also engendered a degree of racial solidarity between White "front of the house" workers and Black "back of the house" workers, which was especially notable in a city that was rigidly segregated.[82] Black workers and entertainers—even world-famous musicians—could not eat, sleep, or gamble at any hotel on the strip. In fact, almost all public facilities in Las Vegas were segregated except in the African American neighborhoods that were restricted to the city's west side. Although state and city officials fought desegregation efforts, the bosses of the casinos capitulated to desegregating their facilities when Local 226 threated a civil rights march down the strip in late 1960. The rest of the city fell in line after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. While these victories provided new leisure opportunities for African Americans, Black workers were still overwhelmingly restricted to "back of the house" positions, and the workers forced the union to continue the fight for better jobs throughout the decade.[83]

[81] Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005) 53-55. The hotels and casinos on the strip were heavily controlled by the mod during the late 1950s and 60s, the bosses of which accepted unions and even had close ties to major unions like the Teamsters.
[82] Orleck, Storming Caesars Palace, 54-56.
[83] Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace*, 58-60, 64.



(L) ***Communication Workers of America strikers, Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company building, 1971*** *(Marion S. Trikosko, LOC P&P, U.S. News & World Report Magazine Photograph Collection)*
(R) ***Public School teachers strike, Detroit, MI 1973*** *(WPRL)*

The civil rights movement was not the only social movement to make an impact on public and private service work during this period. The rebirth of feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s also affected labor organizing in white-collar work, specifically by rekindling interest in office work organizing. Indeed, "most of the net union growth since the 1960s has been in white-collar work, shifting the composition of organized labor toward white-collar members," Kim Moody writes. Almost all of these workers were public sector. Moody continues, "From 1953 to 1976, the high point of public employee organization, over 5 million public workers were added to union roles, bringing the total to almost 6 million."[84] White-collar workers in the private sector, particularly office clerical workers, remained untouched by big AFL-CIO organizing drives, even though these workers suffered the most from automation and segmentation.

Professional Air Traffic Control Organization Strike

The 1972 special task force study *Work in America* noted a forty-six percent increase in white-collar unionism from 1958 to 1968. One of the most significant strikes of the late twentieth century among this white-collar workforce was the Professional Air Traffic Control Organization (PATCO) strike. Founded in 1968, PATCO was a public sector union that worked to secure its members good wages, strong job security, and fringe benefits during the early 1970s. But these successes did not mitigate the stressful nature of the job; controllers in large airports, for instance, went through periods of great job stress during peak travel times throughout the year. This took a visible toll on their health, and the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) often encouraged medical retirements. Other complaints workers had included the fact that pilots, who had to follow their instructions when airborne, earned two to three times as much as them; that pilots and airline staff were able to go on strike and bargain with their employers (private airlines) but the controllers were considered federal employees and thus could not; new technology began to threaten their jobs; and to cut fuel waste during the gas crisis, airlines tried to implement faster takeoffs and landings and cut schedules, making their jobs even more stressful.

[84] Moody, An Injury to All, 210.



UAW President Doug Fraser joins Air Traffic Controllers Strike picketers at Metro Airport, Chicago, IL, 1981 *(WPRL)*

Robert Poli, the head of the union, thought the law preventing federal employees from striking (which was passed in 1955) was outdated at best, and he believed that even if PATCO did not strike, the *threat* of a strike might be enough to get the government to concede to some of their demands. The contract that PATCO had secured for workers was set to expire on March 15, 1981, and new contract negotiations were set to begin in February. After the negotiations collapsed, Poli indeed threatened a strike. However, the union was split. Poli did not have enough support, which Drew Lewis, the head of the FAA, knew, such that the FAA conceded to only five percent of the union's demands—a deal that Poli had to bring to the union members. Union members rejected the offer and made more demands, which the FAA rejected in turn. In response, controllers across the country went on strike, despite the illegality of this action, on August 3. At this point, President Reagan became involved and gave the workers 48 hours to return to their jobs or "face legal consequences." The Justice Department tried to get a legal injunction that would have fined Poli $1,000 and fined the union $1 million for every day of the strike.

The judge in question, Harold Green, ended up fining Poli $1,000 a day beginning immediately, fining PATCO $500,000 if the strike continued past Wednesday night, and $1 million per night if the strike went on beyond Thursday, which would have bankrupted the union by the end of the week. In the meantime, Reagan began to fire striking controllers on that Wednesday.

By August 31, the strike entered its fifth week, and there was some labor solidarity in the US and around the world. Air traffic controllers in Canada began refusing to accept flights originating from the US (until the Canadian government stepped in), as did controllers in Finland, Spain, and Portugal. But the strikers were really hurt by the fact that airports in the US continued to function, and function fairly well, with only skeletal crews. The FAA even offered laid-off pilots

temporary jobs as controllers. As the fall continued, with the government refusing to budge, even support within the AFL-CIO for the strike waned, and strikers began to look for jobs elsewhere. Poli resigned that December. The strike officially ended on June 11, 1982, when "the federal labor relations authority decertified PATCO as the official bargaining agent." There was a legal battle, but the strike ultimately failed and PATCO folded as a union.[85]

What is most amazing about this strike is that it happened at all. White-collar workers had little grasp of the power rallied against public employee unions. They failed to understand the danger of a lockout. At the labor solidarity march for PATCO in September 1981, AFSCME, the union with the most women and African Americans, brought the greatest number of marchers. They came as much in defiance of AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland as they did in favor of the highly paid PATCO strikers. The media coverage of the event, as in most cases, did not address the political meaning of the event, the historical background of such strikes, the significance of the dominantly white-collar nature of the demonstration, or the prominent role of women's organizations. The major lesson that Kirkland took away from the gathering was that the labor movement was becoming increasingly middle class, white-collar, and representative of what had been termed the "salariat"—masses of salaried white-collar workers.

Job Satisfaction (or Lack Thereof)

In 1969, researchers studied 25,000 white-collar workers in eighty-eight major industries and confirmed a marked decline in job satisfaction. "The office today," researchers concluded, "where work is segmented and authoritarian, is often a factory."[86] The introduction of computer technology and other office automation in the last forty years has compounded this assessment: "Our recent research has strengthened, if anything, our earlier conclusion. More and more evidence…documents the deteriorating quality of office work…the introduction of office equipment has extended management control over the work process to the detriment of workers' job satisfaction."[87]

Computerized monitoring has been in effect in the military since the inception of video display monitors, but only recently have firms and municipal offices adopted the practice. Surveillance with cameras began in the jewelry industry and spread to mail order firms. Sometimes both techniques are employed, as in the case of a small metropolitan jewelry mail order firm where video display terminals were used for data entry and cameras for surveillance: "they used the cameras to watch how hard you seemed to be working, when you got up to stretch or take a break, and your attitude at work." The high cost of this surveillance, however, makes its use prohibitive. Computer monitoring is cheaper than camera surveillance, with many business and accounting software programs generating reports on employee performance. The white-collar workers' organization 9to5 produced a survey of women and stress, finding that about 17 percent of women who used computers reported that their work was "measured, monitored, constantly watched or controlled by machine or computer systems." The union completed the study in

[85] Herbert R. Northrup, "The Rise and Demise of PATCO," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 37, no. 2 (1984): 174-80; Melvyn Dubofsky, *Labor in America: A History* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 387-90.

[86] "Work in America; Report of a Special Task Force to the Secretary of Health, Education, Welfare" (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973), 38.

[87] Heidi Hartman, Robert R. Kraul and Louis Tiny, eds., *Computer Chips and Paper Clips: Technology and Women's Employment* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1986), 127-128.

1984; since then, several new generations of software programs have made monitoring easier. Production quotas enforced through automated software packages have become a general feature of the computer revolution. Ironically, the programmers creating these programs have become monitored, while Silicon Valley, California has remained largely untouched by unionism.[88]

The feminist movement was the inspiration for new organizations, like the office workers' organization 9to5 and the stewardesses' union. It is not surprising that, when 9to5 founder Jean Maddox worked as a secretary in 1952, most office workers covered under the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) contract had no idea what the union was doing, or that the United Automobile Workers did not start organizing white-collar workers until 1961. The largest workplaces remained unorganized: DuPont, IBM, Hewlett-Packard. White-collar occupations have remained unorganized, while mechanization through computers and the internet has isolated the work force. Deskilling in white-collar occupations can be seen in the "DotCom" revolution of the 1990s. While many companies that employed new uses of the internet to sell products thrived, others remained small organizations with sales work distributed nationally to work-at-home women tied to phones and computers. Saving on office overhead, promises of future earnings, and employee stock options, these start-up organizations died suddenly when investors realized how unrelated the companies' stock prices were to earnings. What has gone unreported is the sheer exploitation of white-collar workers and a sales force built on false promises of wealth. Thousands of laid-off workers' labor was uncompensated and retirement funds were depleted.[89]

Conclusion

White-collar and service workers have a long, albeit often unrecognized, history of labor activism and organization. Even though a majority of the work in this sector does not share the same characteristics of manual labor in the industrial sectors, service workers shared many of the same grievances and fought for similar issues as their blue-collar counterparts. Lack of autonomy on the job, employment insecurity, long hours and low wages, and discrimination in employment have been common features of both white- and blue-collar work.

While the long era of post-industrialism and the loss of a manufacturing economy has hurt many industrial labor unions, public and private workers in the service economy have not necessarily benefitted from the economic shift that has marked the dominance of service jobs. With public employee unions struggling to stay afloat in the hostile political climate of the early twenty-first century, and workers in the food industry and other low-wage service jobs struggling to unionize and fight for higher wages, the organizing efforts of white-collar and service workers have become the new face of the American labor movement. In fact, they may be one of the last hopes for the legacy of labor unionization in the United States.

[88] Hartman et al., Computer Chips and Paper Clips, 144.
[88] Bush, "'I'd Prefer Not To,'" 361-372.
[89] Rosemary Crompton and Gareth Jones, *White Collar Proletariat: Deskilling and Gender in Clerical Work* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984).



Members of American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 1733 gather to protest unfair labor practices, Memphis, TN, 1976 *(Getty Images)*

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK REGISTRATION GUIDELINES

Thousands of resources represent labor history, most of which are associated with events that made a significant impact on local, state, and regional development. By comparison, a select few made a profound influence on the course of American labor history at a national level. Such properties may have been instrumental in the development of federal labor laws, may have made significant contributions to national political affairs, or may reflect the culture or practices of working Americans. They may also represent an aspect of labor history exceptionally important to understanding of the broad national pattern of labor history in the United States. Together, they represent the struggles of workers in America to achieve economic freedom and security, the application of civic ideals, and the promise of democratic rights.

NHLs designated under the *American Labor History Theme Study* must be acknowledged to be among the nation's most significant properties associated with this context. Nationally significant associations and a high degree of integrity are required for designation.[1] In addition, a property must demonstrate that it represents an important national aspect of labor history and must be evaluated against comparable properties associated with that aspect before its eligibility for NHL designation can be confirmed.

This chapter is intended to assist agencies and individuals in identifying, documenting, and evaluating properties under the Labor History theme study for possible designation as National Historic Landmarks. It outlines the registration requirements for Labor-related properties based on National Historic Landmarks criteria, as applied to the history of labor and known labor-related property types.

Associated Property Types

Properties related to the theme of Labor History differ widely in both form and function. Identified property types include a broad array of buildings, sites, and structures, with remarkably different physical characteristics. When identifying a location related to labor history, consideration must be given to the property's specific form and function, along with associations and physical characteristics. This study presents two primary means for understanding the various functions that places of labor history played: their occupational distinctions and associated subthemes. First, each chapter identifies the types of properties specific to the kind of labor performed. For example, the Transportation chapter highlights properties such as canals, railroads, ports, and other modes of transportation over land and water; the Extractive chapter highlights oil rigs, lumber camps, and various types of metal, hard rock, and coal mines. Second, property identification is provided by the subthemes carried throughout the study as a whole, which include: Working and Moving, Living and Dying, Playing and Praying, Teaching and Learning, and Organizing and Struggling. For example, locations that served as key places of pro-union demonstrations, like Union Square in New York City, were significant to the labor organizations representing numerous occupations.

[1] Please consult the following section for further information on how to determine the standards of integrity for labor history properties.

There are two primary types of attributes that can help identify potential National Historic Landmarks related to labor history: physical and associative. Physical attributes refer to a property's structural features, including, but not limited to, size, scale, massing, architectural details, and the relationship between a place and its environmental surroundings. The physical attributes of properties of labor history are remarkably diverse, even within a specific labor type. Both the structural elements of factories and their relationship to their immediate environment vary based on the factory's primary function, i.e., the kinds of products produced there. For example, the size, layout, and structural components of steel mills are quite different from those of textile mills. To determine the primary physical features of a particular property related to labor history's occupational themes, it would be best to complete a comparative study of other NHLs that were constructed at a similar time and that served a similar function.

Associative attributes refer to a property's relationship to historically significant people, events, and activities. Associative attributes can be defined by the functions that a property served and the cultural affiliations it maintained during its identified period of significance. Knowledge of important historical contexts is therefore necessary for identifying the associate attributes of labor history's different property types.

Criteria of National Significance

National Historic Landmarks regulations (Code of Federal Regulations [CFR], Title 36, Part 65.4 [a and b]) establish how nationally significant properties may be designated. According to these regulations, the qualities of national significance are ascribed to districts, sites, and objects that possess exceptional value or quality for illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, engineering, or culture; possess a high degree of integrity; and meet one or more of the criteria presented below. For a more detailed explanation of National Historic Landmarks criteria, see National Park Service Bulletin, *How to Prepare National Historic Landmark Nominations*.

Criterion 1. Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained.

Criterion 2. Are associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States.

Criterion 3. Represent some great idea or ideal of the American people.

Criterion 4. Embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen exceptionally valuable for study of a period, style, or method of construction; or that represent a significant, distinctive, and exceptional entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

Criterion 5. Are composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but

collectively compose an entity of exceptional historical or artistic significance; or outstandingly commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture.

Criterion 6. Have yielded or may be likely to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures, or by shedding light upon periods of occupation of large areas of the United States. Such sites are those which have yielded, or which may reasonably be expected to yield, data affecting theories, concepts, and ideas to a major degree (Note: for further information on sites that qualify under Criterion 6, please consult the *Labor Archeology of the Industrial Era Theme Study*).

The discussion below provides specific suggestions of criteria and topics with which potential NHLs under the *American Labor History* context might be associated. Property types can relate to more than one criterion. Properties identified under Criteria 1 or 2 will primarily emphasize associative attributes, whereas those under Criterion 4 will highlight a site's physical attributes.

NHL Criterion 1 (Events):

A property may qualify under Criterion 1 if it is associated with an event that made a significant contribution to the broad national patterns of American labor history. The event must be one that had a nationally important impact or influence on labor history as supported by scholarly assessments. An associated property must "outstandingly represent" such an event, strongly and definitively convey and interpret its meaning, and be considered of the highest importance.

The following are the occupational types that may relate to this criteria and examples of associated property types under each. They are organized based on the particular occupational types found in each chapter of this study.

1. Manufacture

Properties under this category must outstandingly represent events associated with manufacturing labor in the United States. These include significant labor locations such as plants, mills, and factories that served as places of major changes in production that affected labor, that became destinations for workers and their families, that witnessed important struggles for unionization, or that precipitated workplace reform efforts. Other properties under this category consist of locations related to the domestic and community life of manufacturing workers. Examples of manufacture-related associated property types and how they may demonstrate significance under Criterion 1 include the following:

- Corporate-sponsored planned communities recognized as models or prototypes in a particular industry or municipality that developed around a single plant, mill, or factory.
    - **Harmony Mills**, Cohoes, New York (NHL, 1999)
      The Harmony Mills Company was one of the largest producers of cotton fabric for printed calicoes and fine cotton muslins in the United States from the 1860s through the 1880s. The mill complex retains a high degree of integrity, with several extant mill building and housing types, as well as the power canal system.



Harmony Mills, Cohoes, NY 1969 *(Jack E. Boucher, LOC P&P, HAER NY-5)*

- Workplace or community properties that became places of major strike activity.
    - **Pietro and Maria Botto House**, Haledon, New Jersey (NHL, 1982)
      In 1913, 25,000 workers in the Patterson Silk Mills, most of whom were immigrant women, initiated a strike that lasted five months, shutting down 300 factories in the city of Patterson—the center of silk production in the country. Leaders of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) who came to assist the strikers used the second-story balcony of the Bottos' home as a platform from which they delivered speeches to strikers and their sympathizers every Sunday during the strike.

- Industrial locations and communities that became destinations for particular immigrant or migrant groups.
    - **Ybor Historic District,** Tampa, Florida (NHL, 1990)
      In 1885, cigar Manufacturer Vincente Martinez Ybor established a manufacturing center of cigar production outside Tampa, Florida. Ybor became a destination for Cuban immigrants in the cigar industry; it also attracted Italian and German immigrants, as well as southern African Americans.

- Workplaces associated with significant changes in production and labor processes.
    - **Highland Park Ford Plant**, Highland Park, Michigan (NHL, 1978)
      The location where Henry Ford implemented the moving assembly line, which paved the way for unprecedented output in automobile manufacturing.

- Worksites and community places known for events that generated national awareness of labor issues and/or led to industrial reform.
    - **Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Building**, New York, New York (NHL, 1991)
      This building became nationally recognized after a fire broke out on March 15, 1911, resulting in the deaths of 146 workers, most of whom were women. The tragedy led to investigative hearings that generated new workplace fire prevention laws across the country.

2. Extractive

Properties under this category must outstandingly represent events associated with extractive labor in the United States. These include significant worksites such as oil fields, mines, and

timber tracts. They also include locations of workplace disasters, places of significant union organizing, and locations of bitter, nationally recognized strike activity. Other properties under this category consist of places related to the domestic and community life of extractive workers in company-sponsored camps and towns, as well as incorporated municipalities directly tied to a major form of extractive labor. The locations of major developments in workplace technology and changes in labor processes may also be considered. Examples of extractive-related associated property types and how they may demonstrate significance under Criterion 1 include the following:

- Corporate-sponsored planned communities recognized as models or prototypes in a particular industry or municipality that developed around a single mine, field, or tract.
    - **Port Gamble Historic District**, Port Gamble, Washington (NHL, 1978)
      As the best example of a lumber town in the Pacific Northwest during the second half of the nineteenth century, Port Gamble provides insight into the development of a lumber-based community. A majority of the early workers in this district came from timber areas in Maine, and the town that developed in Port Gamble was designed to reflect the conditions with which workers had been familiar on the East Coast. The company also hired Native Americans to work in the mills, and this property illustrates the interactions among a diverse workforce in industrial communities.



Residential district and community hall, Port Gamble, WA, 1996 *(Rod Slemmons, LOC P&P, HABS WA-115 & WA-144)*

- Workplace or community locations that became places of major strike activity.
    - **Matewan Historic District**, Matewan, West Virginia (NHL, 1997)
      The town of Matewan is recognized as nationally significant because it became embroiled in the West Virginia Mine Wars of 1920-21. This "war" was an armed battle that culminated from of a series of coal mine strikes. Striking workers demanded company recognition of the United Mine Workers of America. This pivotal event led to the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain in Logan County, West Virginia. The battle was the most violent episode in the history of the labor movement, pitting an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 union miners against local law enforcement, hired guns, and volunteers. The uprising only came to an end when then-president Warren Harding intervened by dispatching 2,100 federal troops.

- Industrial properties and communities that became destinations for particular immigrant or migrant groups.
    - **Pocahontas Mine No. 1**, Pocahontas, Virginia (NHL, 1994)
      The discovery of a large seam of semi-bituminous coal in southwestern Virginia led to the development of one of the richest coalfields in the country. Opening in 1882, the Pocahontas Mine attracted skilled miners, both native born and immigrant, from the coalfields of Pennsylvania to Virginia. New immigrants arriving from Germany and Hungary were recruited to work in the mine directly from the Castle Garden immigration center in New York City.

- Worksites and community places known for tragedies that generated national awareness of labor issues and/or led to industrial reform.
    - **Ludlow Tent Colony Site**, Ludlow, Colorado (NHL, 2009)
      The Ludlow Tent Colony Site is the location of the Ludlow Massacre of 1914, a battle between striking miners and the Colorado National Guard during a strike that had begun the previous year. On the night of April 20, 1914, a fire deliberately set among the tents of striking workers and their families caused the deaths of two women and eleven children who had sought safety in a crude cellar underneath one of the tents.

- A worksite that facilitated technological advances that changed labor processes
    - **Shenandoah-Dives Mill**, Silverton, Colorado (NHL, 2000)
      As the best example of an early twentieth-century flotation mill, this property illustrates important developments in mining practices. Constructed in 1929, the mill retains the unique features of early twentieth-century hard rock milling processes for extracting gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc.



Shenandoah-Dives Mill, Silverton, CO, 2005 *(Jet Lowe, LOC P&P, HAER CO-91)*

3. Agriculture

Properties under this category must outstandingly represent events associated with agricultural labor in the United States. These include significant worksites that employed large numbers of agricultural workers, farming communities established via patterns of migration, places that witnessed reforms in agricultural labor practices and processes, organizing locations for farmers and farm workers, places of major strike activity, properties relating to agricultural education,

and planned communities of agricultural workers. Examples of agriculture-related associated property types and how they may demonstrate significance under Criterion 1 include the following:

- Corporate-sponsored planned communities for agricultural laborers, or government communities of resettled farmers and farm laborers.
    - **Frederick A. and Sophia Bagg Bonanza Farm,** Richland County, North Dakota (NHL, 2005)
      Established in 1915, this exceptional example of a western bonanza farm illustrates the large-scale farms known as "farm factories" in the upper Midwest and central plains. During the late nineteenth century, these systems of agricultural mass production primarily grew wheat. In addition, the Baggs also grew corn and sweet clover and raised sheep and hogs across 7,000 acres. Labor organization on these expansive agricultural tracts was modeled after industrial settings, with superintendents and foremen overseeing the daily work operations of large gangs of seasonal migrant laborers.

- Workplace or community properties that became places of major strike activity.
    - **Nuestra Señora Reina de La Paz**, Keene, California (National Monument, 2012)
      As the headquarters of the United Farm Workers, "La Paz" was at the forefront of the American farm worker movement. Thousands of farm workers and their supporters streamed through La Paz to meet with movement leaders, learn from other farm workers, devise strategies, negotiate contracts, receive training, and celebrate meaningful events.

- Agricultural areas and communities that became destinations for particular immigrant or migrant groups.
    - **Nicodemus Township**, Nicodemus, Kansas (NHL, 1976)
      In the period after Reconstruction, when the "Redeemer"-elected politicians in the South stymied any civil, political, and economic advancement for African Americans, a large-scale migration to western states began. Figures like Benjamin Pap Singleton encouraged the southern migrants to develop towns in states like Kansas. Singleton established eleven of his own from 1873 to 1880. In 1877, Nicodemus was established as one of these towns, attracting migrants well into the early twentieth century.



AME Church and District 1 School, Nicodemus, KS, 1983 *(Clayton B. Fraser, LOC P&P, HABS KS-49-I & KS-49-O)*

- Places associated with significant changes in production and labor processes, as well as sites of significant agrarian educational programs.
    - **Porter Farm**, Terrell, Texas (NHL, 1964)
      The location of one of the earliest agricultural cooperatives, the Porter Farm became nationally significant in 1903 when demonstrations there led to the beginning of the Agricultural Extension Service. At the Porter Farm, Dr. Seaman A. Knapp led the first demonstration of farming practices designed to thwart the spread of the boll weevil, a pest that had been devastating cotton crops. From that point on, the Porter Farm became a demonstration area to educate regional farmers on improved farming techniques.

4. Transportation

Properties under this category must outstandingly represent events associated with transportation labor in the United States. These include places representing key modes of transportation over land and water, significant locations in the construction and operation of means of transportation, properties where transportation workers organized, and locations of major strike activity. Examples of transportation-related associated property types and how they may demonstrate significance under Criterion 1 include the following:

- Key sites of transportation-related industries, including railroads, canals, ports, and trucking routes.
    - **Pullman Historic District**, Chicago, Illinois (NHL, 1970; National Monument, 2015)
      Pullman is distinguished as a model company town built between 1880 and 1884 for industrialist George Pullman to attract the thousands of skilled workers he needed to build and repair railroad cars and to create a more efficient workforce. Pullman also played an important role in labor history when the town became engulfed in the American Railway Union (ARU) strike in 1894.

- Workplace or community locations that became places of major strike activity.
    - **Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Martinsburg Shops**, Martinsburg, West Virginia (NHL, 2003)
      During July 1877, workers at the Martinsburg shops, whose wages had just been cut by 10 percent in the midst of an economic depression, went on strike to demand higher pay. Soon, the strike spread among railroad workers and workers in other industries that had also been subject to wage reductions, with over one hundred thousand workers joining the effort within days. The strike spread from Martinsburg and Baltimore across the country to San Francisco, including several major northern cities.



Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, Martinsburg Shops, Martinsburg, WV, 1970 *(William Edward Barrett, LOC P&P, HAER WV-1)*

- Industrial properties and communities that became destinations for particular immigrant or migrant groups.
    - **Boley Historic District**, Boley, Oklahoma (NHL, 1975)
      The town of Boley was founded in 1903 as an entirely African American community. Advertising the town as a place free from racial oppression where African Americans were able to practice local self-governance, Thomas M. Haynes, the townsite manager, drew African American migrants from across the South. While its origins were rooted in a camp for African American railroad workers, Boley soon expanded to include a commercial center and a network of independent farmsteads.

5. Service and White Collar

Properties under this category must outstandingly represent events associated with service or white-collar labor in the United States. These include major locations of service work including large retailers, places where important ideas about labor and labor processes were developed and disseminated among a large audience, properties where service and white-collar workers were unionized, and locations of significant strikes. Examples of service and white collar-related associated property types and how they may demonstrate significance under Criterion 1 include the following:

- Significant worksites of service industries, including retail and public-sector work.
    - **A.T. Stewart Store, "Sun Building,"** New York, New York (NHL, 1978)
      A.T. Stewart, widely recognized as the figure responsible for conceptualizing the modern department store, had this building constructed in 1845 and then significantly remodeled in 1850. The property is deemed significant for its architecture and relationship to the history of commerce, but it should also be recognized as a model for the division of retail labor into modern departments.

- Community and leisure sites for white collar and service workers.
    - **New Century Guild,** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (NHL, 1993)
      The New Century Guild was formed to address the needs and concerns of working women, particularly those in white-collar work. In 1906, the Guild opened a center that provided working women with an array of resources: a restaurant that served noontime meals, a large library, a lecture series, and a health insurance plan.

- Workplace or community sites that became places of major strike activity.

NHL Criterion 2 (Person):

To be designated under Criterion 2, a property must be associated with an individual who played a preeminent role in American labor history and whose nationally significant contributions can be specifically documented. To determine a definitive national role, it is necessary to compare the individual's contributions with the contributions of others in the same field. A comparison between properties associated with an individual must also be made to determine which property best represents the person's nationally historic contributions.

Although many figures in labor history are industry-specific (e.g., organizers of specific industries like A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters), several overlap among industries. For instance, John Lewis played a significant role both in organizing for the United Mine Workers and as a founding member of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).

A person whose associated property may be considered under NHL Criterion 2 might include the following:

- A preeminent labor leader who directly mobilized others across the country to act collectively in strikes and campaigns vital to labor reform.
    - **Terence V. Powderly House,** Scranton, Pennsylvania (NHL, 1966)
      From 1879-1893, Terence Powderly headed the Knights of Labor in the role of Grand Master Workman. Powderly was the most well known leader of the Knights, the first nationally successful trade union.

- A nationally important pioneer in developing trendsetting towns to attract and hold workers and discourage union formation.
    - **Milton S. Hershey Mansion**, Hershey, Pennsylvania (NHL, 1983)
      While residing in this property from 1908 to 1945, Milton Hershey designed the chocolate factories and town that housed the workers of the Hershey facilities.

Hershey's management of the town illustrates how company towns and the industries to which they were connected adapted to the economic conditions of the Depression.

- A federal official who garnered social justice and civil liberties for workers and made significant contributions to national economic and political affairs.
    - **Frances Perkins House**, Washington, DC (NHL, 1991)
      Frances Perkins served as the Secretary of Labor throughout Franklin Roosevelt's twelve-year presidency and was the nation's first female cabinet officer. She is considered the driving force behind many of the New Deal programs on which today's federal social safety net is based.

- An individual who established nationally recognized standards that served as a catalyst for a new era of production.
    - **Tuskegee Institute**, Tuskegee, Alabama (NHL, 1965)
      In 1881, Booker T. Washington established a state-chartered normal school in Tuskegee, Alabama. Tuskegee Institute became a premier regional center for academic and industrial training for African American men and women. George Washington Carver became the director of the agricultural department in 1886. Washington's expertise in botany and soil enrichment turned the experimental farm at Tuskegee into a model for demonstrating high-yield crops.



Carver Museum and Tompkins Hall, Campus, Tuskegee Institute, Macon County, AL, 1978
(Duane Phillips, LOC P&P, HABS AL-876, HABS AL-868-D)

- An artistic professional (artist, writer, musician, photographer) whose work generated national awareness of labor issues.
    - **Detroit Industrial Murals**, Detroit, Michigan (NHL, 2013)
      Diego Rivera's series of paintings, largely funded by the Ford Motor Company, depicted the history of manufacturing in Detroit, with a special emphasis on the Ford River Rouge Plant. Known for his progressive politics and beliefs that art should be for the public, Rivera's Detroit murals depicted relationships between male workers—both African American and white—and machines, as well as workers and management.

NHL Criterion 3 (Ideas):

Properties are likely to be eligible under NHL Criterion 3 only in those rare instances when they are strongly associated with ideas and ideals of the highest order in the history of labor. While no place associated with labor history has been evaluated under Criterion 3, this criterion can be applied to properties that exemplify such national ideals as achieving democratic rights and securing freedom. Criterion 3 is not often employed because many aspects of significance under this criterion fall under the purview of Criterion 1. Properties nominated under Criterion 3 are also eligible for designation under Criterion 1, and much of their significance can be explained under this criterion. A property that could potentially be considered for revision to include this criterion in its nomination is:

- **Union Square**, New York, New York (NHL, 1998).
  Because this site was a major center for demonstrations and marches in support of labor activism around the country, Union Square has been a symbol of the labor movement from the late nineteenth century through the twentieth century. Furthermore, according to many historians, the first Labor Day parade took place here on September 5, 1882.

NHL Criterion 4 (Architecture/Engineering):

Places associated with labor history that may be eligible for NHL designation under Criterion 4 must be exceptionally valuable in illustrating the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or method of construction, or the distinguishing characteristics of a particular type of landscape design. This characteristic must be one that had a nationally important impact or influence on labor history as supported by scholarly assessments. In regard to labor-related properties, these characteristics apply to workers' living conditions or the work environment.

Often, the architectural, engineering, and landscape features associated with different occupations varied widely according to the nature of the labor involved. Mills, factories, plants, mines, outbuildings, stores, and warehouses, for example, share few if any architectural features. Even more dissimilar are bridges, tunnels, and cultivated or designed landscapes. Therefore, consideration of occupational type must be taken into consideration when applying this criterion to a worksite.

Examples of associated property types and how they may demonstrate significance under Criterion 4 include the following:

- A factory that possesses exceptional value in interpreting a work process, which revolutionized manufacturing methods and labor throughout the nation.
  - **Ford River Rouge Complex,** Dearborn, Michigan (NHL, 1978)
    At this plant, which opened in 1927, automaker Henry Ford achieved his dream of a nonstop, continuous production line. Ford's work on the automated assembly line profoundly shaped the future of automobile production and working conditions in automobile plants.

- A mill that is the best extant example of a particular engineering method.
  - **Lightfoot Mill**, Chester Springs, Pennsylvania (NHL, 2005)

Although not specifically nominated under the theme of labor history, this water-powered grist mill is exemplary for illustrating the labor-intensive process of flour production in the eighteenth century, prior to the technological advancements of automated milling. The remarkably intact power transmission system in the mill illustrates the processes of flour production prior to as well as after the introduction of automated technology.



Lightfoot Mill, Chester Springs, PA, 2019 *(LOC P&P, CMH)*

- A department store that established industry standards for spatial arrangements of retail work.
    - **Marshall Field and Company Store**, Chicago, Illinois (NHL, 1978)
      As one of the most significant department stores in the United States, the Marshall Field and Company Store is recognized for its significance in the history of American commerce as well as commercial architecture. In the latter category, the building retains a high degree of exterior integrity, and its interior is relatively intact as well, rendering this property capable of illustrating the structures of retail work in large-scale urban department stores of the twentieth century.

- A district that outstandingly represents innovative community planning and that served as a prototype in spatial design and housing construction for working class residents.
    - **Port Gamble Historic District**, Port Gamble, Washington (NHL, 1978)
      As the best example of a company constructed lumber town in the Pacific Northwest during the second half of the nineteenth century, Port Gamble provides insight into the process of lumber extraction and manufacturing, along with the development of a lumber-based community.

Other properties that could be nominated under this criterion for labor history, but for which there are no currently designated NHLs, include the following:

- Stone bridges and tunnels constructed by masons.
- Rammed earth or adobe housing.
- Cattle trails used to take herds to railheads.
- Terraced landscapes developed to maximize cultivation.

NHL Criterion 5 (Districts):

Districts that collectively possess extraordinary importance under another NHL Criterion may be considered for designation under Criterion 5, as well. This criterion applies to collections of properties wherein no one resource alone qualifies as nationally significant, but where the resources taken together are significant for their association with a nationally significant event, movement, or pattern of national development. *Architecturally* significant districts are more likely to be designated under Criterion 4.

Examples of historic districts that may be eligible under Criterion 5 and how they may demonstrate national significance include the following:

- A municipal area that served communities during a nationally significant strike.
    - **Pullman Historic District**, Chicago, Illinois (NHL, 1970; National Monument, 2015) Pullman is distinguished as a model company town built between 1880 and 1884 for industrialist George Pullman to attract the thousands of skilled workers he needed to build and repair railroad cars and to create a more efficient work force. Pullman also played an important role in labor history when the town became engulfed in the American Railway Union (ARU) strike in 1894.



***Pullman Industrial Complex Administration Building and Worker Housing, Chicago, IL, 1962 (L), 1977** (R) (Philip Turner, LOC P&P HABS IL-1091; Jack E. Boucher, HABS, IL-173-6)*

- A complex of labor and domestic labor created by a company for workers.
    - **Calumet Historic District**, Calumet, Michigan (NHL, 1989)
      During the 1870s, the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company was responsible for mining 50 percent of America's copper. Its company town, Calumet, is a significant example of corporate-sponsored community planning and paternalism designed to prevent unionism. It also encompasses the memorial to the Italian Hall Disaster of 1913.

- A town that developed around a particular industry with buildings from its period of significance.
    - **Butte-Anaconda Historic District**, Walkerville, Anaconda, and Butte, Montana (NHL, 1961; revised documentation, 2006)

> The historic resources of this district collectively comprise a remarkable landscape that represents nationally significant themes of industrial extraction and labor conflict in the United States. During a period of rapid industrialization, Butte-Anaconda helped to spearhead the rise of two prominent unions: the Western Federation of Miners and the International Workers of the World.

NHL Criterion 6 (Information Potential):

This criterion applies to properties that have the potential for significant scientific importance by shedding light on the past through analysis of the data a property contains. This criterion is most often employed to acknowledge the archeological significance of a property and its potential to change archeological interpretations and theories. A site of labor history that has been designated under both Criterion 1 and Criterion 6 is:

- **Ludlow Tent Colony Site**, Ludlow, Colorado (NHL, 2009)
  The Ludlow Tent Colony Site is the location of the Ludlow Massacre of 1914, a battle between striking miners and the Colorado National Guard during a strike that had begun the previous year. On the night of April 20, 1914, a fire was deliberately set among the tents of striking workers and their families, resulting in the deaths of two women and eleven children who had sought safety in a crude cellar underneath one of the tents. While there are no structural remains from its period of significance, the relatively undisturbed grounds of the tent colony site render them potentially archeologically significant.





Ludlow tent colony site, 2008 *(NHL Program files)*

For further information on sites that qualify under Criterion 6, please consult the Labor Archeology of the Industrial Era Theme Study.

National Historic Landmark Exceptions

Certain kinds of property are not usually considered for National Historic Landmark designation. These include: cemeteries, birthplaces, graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, and properties that have achieved significance within the past fifty years. Nevertheless, these properties can still be designated, if they meet special requirements called NHL Exceptions, in addition to the aforementioned NHL criteria. Such properties may be found to qualify, if they meet one or more of the following exceptions. For more detailed explanation of the NHL exceptions, see the National Park Service Bulletin, *How to Prepare National Historic Landmark Nominations*:

Exception 1 A religious property deriving its primary national significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance. Such an example may be a church that served as an important place for labor organizing. Two examples of properties potentially eligible for this exception are the Paseo Baptist Church in Kansas City, Missouri and the Clayborn Temple in Memphis, Tennessee.

Exception 2 A building or structure that has been moved from its original location but that is nationally significant primarily for its architectural merit or for consequential association with persons or events of transcendent importance in the nation's history. An example of property that potentially falls under this exception is the Schubert Theater in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Exception 3 A site of a building or structure no longer standing but with a consequential association with a person or event of transcendent importance in the nation's history. The requirements for this exception are rarely met.

Exception 4 A birthplace, grave, or burial site if it is of a historical figure of transcendent national significance and no other appropriate site, building, or structure directly associated with the productive life of that person exists. For example, while not a current NHL, the Union Miners Cemetery in Mount Olive, Illinois, contains the gravesite of labor organizer Mother Jones. Because no other properties with good integrity and with a strong association with Jones during her period of significance exist, her gravesite can qualify for this exemption since it is the site that best represents her historical significance. The property contains a monument dedicated to her and miners who died during important labor struggles.

Exception 5 A cemetery that derives its primary national significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, or from an exceptionally distinctive design or an exceptionally significant event. For example, the Union Miners Cemetery is the only union-owned cemetery in the country that became the site of an annual Miners' Day celebration beginning in 1899. However, gravesites of figures that have other properties associated with them would not be eligible for this exemption.

Exception 6 A reconstruction of a building or ensemble of buildings of extraordinary national significance when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other buildings or structures with the same association have survived. Although not related to this theme, the town of Williamsburg, Virginia, is a classic example of this exception.

Exception 7 A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own national historical significance. The monument for the victims of the Ludlow Massacre that the United Mine Workers established on the site of the former Ludlow Tent Colony in 1918 is an example of this type of property, as is the Haymarket Martyrs' Monument that was dedicated to the men executed on allegations of provoking the uprising.

Exception 8 A property achieving national significance within the past 50 years if it is of extraordinary national importance. This importance must exceed that for which a property has exceptional significance. The NHL The Forty Acres in Delano, California, the union headquarters for the United Farm Workers of America, and associated with leading labor organizer Cesar Chávez, is one such site that has met this exception.



Forty Acres, Tomasa Zapata Mireles Co-op Building, Delano, CA, 2012 *(James W. Rosenthal, HABS CA-278-A)*

INTEGRITY

Properties considered for National Historic Landmark designation must meet one of the National Historic Landmark criteria identified above and meet any relevant National Historic Landmark exceptions. In addition, a property must retain a high degree of integrity. Integrity is defined as

the ability of a property to convey its significance. The seven aspects or qualities of integrity are: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. For National Historic Landmark designation, properties must possess these aspects to a high degree. All properties must retain the essential physical features that define both *why* a property is significant (criteria and themes) and *when* it was significant (periods of significance). They are features without which a specific property can no longer be identified as, for instance, a mid-twentieth century factory.

The first steps in assessing the integrity of a specific property are to define the essential features a property must have to represent its national significance and then to determine whether those features are present to a degree sufficient to readily convey the property's national significance. In order to establish relative merit of the proposed property, the property should be compared both to others already identified as nationally significant in the same theme and to similar properties not yet nationally recognized. The evaluation of integrity is a somewhat subjective judgment. This subjectivity can be minimized when the evaluation is grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its historical associations or attributes.

The following is a description of the aspects of integrity and special issues that may be anticipated with labor-related properties. For more detailed explanation of integrity, see the National Park Service Bulletin, *How to Prepare National Historic Landmark Nominations*.

- *Location* is the exact place where the historic event occurred or where the historic property was constructed. While many properties associated with the *American Labor History* context, such as factories and communities, are likely to be in their original location simply because of their size, some structures, such as houses or churches, may have been relocated. Properties considered under Criterion 1 must at least remain in close geographical proximity to the original locations where events occurred. Properties that have been moved from their original locations can be considered for designation under this theme study only if they meet the special requirements of NHL exception 2 (above).

- *Design* is the combination of elements that create the historic form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. Many labor properties, such as factories, will have most likely lost much if not all of their historic equipment and are likely to have been converted to new uses. Places that have experienced such adaptive reuse must retain key essential physical features and possess a high degree of original structural form, an adherence to the original plan and spatial arrangement, and defining architectural details. Buildings later modified for other kinds of use that are in keeping with their original function (e.g. a factory that has been adapted for a different type of manufacturing) may still retain integrity, while those converted to accommodate new uses must be carefully evaluated in relationship to the property's significance. Design can also be a defining feature in districts, reflected in the way in which the buildings, sites, or structures related to each other during their historic period of significance. Although the overall layout and design of a planned company town may have survived, a district representing this resource is not likely to retain the high integrity necessary for NHL designation unless the historic design of individual houses has also been maintained. Both the district as a whole and its essential physical features (i.e., contributing resources) must retain integrity in this regard.

- *Setting* is the physical environment of a historic property. It involves how, not just where, the property is situated and its historical relationship to surrounding features and open space. The settings of properties frequently have changed dramatically over time (e.g., from rural to urban, from closely surrounded by other buildings and structures to standing isolated among vacant buildings and parking lots). It is important to take into consideration both the significance of an individual property and the importance of its setting to this significance when evaluating integrity of setting. The integrity of setting is especially important for sites in which landscape design is an essential physical feature, or for worksites of extractive labor such as logging and mining, in which the property's setting is character defining.

- *Materials* are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. To retain the high integrity necessary for landmark designation, most of the historic materials and features from the period of significance must have been preserved, even if the property has been rehabilitated. If significant events took place inside buildings, interiors must also be largely intact. For example, if a factory retains integrity of design but now has wood siding instead of its historic brick, or if the windows are now vinyl instead of the original wood, then the property would not be considered to have integrity of materials.

- *Workmanship* is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history. It is the evidence of artisans' labor and skill in constructing or altering a building, structure, object, or site. It may be expressed in sophisticated architectural details or in plain finishes and vernacular methods of construction. As one example, the character-defining masonry and cornice detailing present in industrial commercial resources reflects the period of construction and prosperity of a community. Missing detailing or covered masonry might result in compromising the integrity of these resources. Integrity of workmanship is especially important for sites nominated under Criterion 4. For instance, the Lightfoot Mill NHL is exemplary for illustrating vernacular construction of grain mills in the eighteenth century and because it still contains the power- transmission technology from its period of significance.

- *Feeling* is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of essential physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character. For example, a camp where the houses have been enlarged and the historic dirt roads have been paved may be considered to have lost its historic "sense of place," while one that retains its original design, materials, workmanship, and setting can still convey the feeling of life in a working class community.

- *Association* is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association when it is the actual place where an event or activity occurred and readily conveys that relationship to an observer. Labor headquarters, for example, have more direct associations with the significant work of important union leaders than houses or apartments where they may have spent only their leisure time. As in the case of integrity of feeling, association requires the presence of essential physical features that convey a property's historic character.

Comparison of Properties

Each property considered for NHL designation under the *American Labor History* theme must be evaluated against other properties bearing a similar nationally significant association to determine its relative significance. Comparing properties with similar ones elsewhere in the country provides the necessary basis for determining which have the strongest associations and the highest levels of integrity and are therefore good candidates for landmark designation. Comparison should be made to properties already designated as NHLs as well as others that may be nationally important. For example, in nominating a site like the Cigar Factory in Charleston, South Carolina as an NHL, comparison would have to be made with other regional urban factories, especially those of the tobacco manufacturing industry.

Evaluation of the relative significance and integrity of properties being considered for NHL designation under this theme study is vital because thousands of labor-related properties exist, and there may be many examples of a particular property type in existence. The intent of comparison is to determine how the significance of a property proposed for NHL designation differs from other similar properties, and whether it would be considered the best representation of this significance. Of the many labor-related properties that survive intact, many would likely meet the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the state or local level. Only a few, however, would be considered nationally significant and prove to be good candidates for NHL designation. Considerable research may be required to develop the comparative information necessary to determine which ones best represent their relevant topic at the national level.

METHODOLOGY

Creating the Context

The *American Labor History Theme Study* was first issued in 2003. This earlier document was the product of several years of research identifying and commemorating labor properties. In partnership with the Newberry Library of Chicago, the National Park Service initiated this study with a broad-based strategy meeting. More than fifty labor historians, local community and historic preservation leaders, and National Park Service representatives met at Lowell National Historical Park in Massachusetts. For the study's historic context, the meeting participants recommended preparing a range of essays that would strike a balance among sectors of the economy, categories of labor history, region, race, and gender. The topics included an introductory essay on labor history on the national landscape and specific essays on agriculture, extractive labor, white-collar and public sector work, manufacturing, transportation, and household labor.

From 2014 through 2016, the study underwent significant revisions. Each chapter was adapted to include a greater emphasis on the places of labor history that effectively tell the multiple narratives of this history. Discussions of properties designated as NHLs under the theme of Labor History were incorporated into each existing chapter, and a new chapter on the places and significant themes of agricultural labor was included in the study. The revisions were also designed to include a greater representation of the different social and cultural groups that comprised the American working class. These revisions benefited greatly from the work produced in recent theme studies such as *American Latinos and the Making of the United States* and *Finding a Path Forward: Asian American Pacific Islander National Historic Landmarks Theme Study*.

In 2021 and 2022, the study was reviewed and updated to add recently designated Labor NHLs and newly identified labor history properties for potential NHL designation and National Register of Historic Places listing. Images were also added to the study in order to illustrate many of the resources.

Inventory Search for Sites Recognized as Nationally Significant

To identify designated National Historic Landmarks that relate to themes of labor history, the author of the revised guidelines consulted Allen S. Chambers Jr.'s encyclopedic study, *National Landmarks, America's Treasures: The National Park Foundation's Complete Guide to National Historic Landmarks* (2000). In addition, staff of the NHL Program compiled a list of properties nominated under the theme of labor history after 2000, as well as properties that highlight themes of labor history even if they were not nominated for such significance.

Identifying Potential NHLs

To identify potential landmark properties, the Newberry Library team distributed approximately 400 mailings to State Historic Preservation Officers, state historical societies, labor

organizations, and labor scholars requesting recipients to suggest properties that fit into the following categories:

1. Work processes—Properties that illustrate the changing nature of the work process, such as the rise of assembly-line production.

2. Events—Properties associated with nationally significant events in labor history, such as strikes and lockouts.

3. People—Properties associated with significant individuals in labor history, such as labor and political leaders.

4. Leisure establishments—Properties that played a central role in the recreational and leisure activities of workers, such as amusement parks or theaters.

5. Labor education—Properties associated with working class education.

6. Working class communities—Company towns, institutions, and other properties associated with working class communities.

7. Labor organizing—Properties associated with union organizing and political activities, such as meeting places and union halls.

The Newberry Library historians also asked the recipients to suggest properties representative of the ten most significant events, people, and transformative processes in American labor history. Over 200 individuals and organizations submitted suggestions for 297 properties. These included 81 sites for manufacturing, 69 for extractive, 37 for agriculture, 19 for public sector and white-collar labor, 18 for transportation, 10 for domestic labor, and 86 for general labor (with some overlap). From these suggestions the Newberry Library team produced a list of 52 properties deserving of further consideration. Eleven of these properties were nominated for National Historic Landmarks designation during the course of the theme study's original preparation.

Revisions to the Guidelines

For the revisions to each chapter and for the new content on agricultural labor, historian Rachel Donaldson conducted additional research in 2016 on important locations, events, and figures related to each occupational type addressed in the study.

In addition to the revisions and updates to the content of the individual chapters, the guidelines were also modified and updated to include recent NHLs nominated under the theme of labor history, to provide a list of properties potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and to include a comprehensive list of the nominations of designated NHLs that relate to labor history but that were not identified as such. For the latter, the author of these revisions culled through the record of existing NHLs to identify those that reflect the themes identified in the study as a whole.

Peer Review

This study was made available for national and state level review and for scholarly peer review. Those contacted for review included National Park Service staff in the National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Programs; National Park Service historians with expertise in labor history; and all State, Federal, and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers.

SURVEY RESULTS



Diego Rivera, Detroit Industry Murals, Detroit, MI, n.d. *(NHL Program files)*

This chapter identifies properties associated with events considered nationally significant within the history of labor in the United States. These properties are divided into four categories: 1) Labor-Related Properties Recognized as Nationally Significant; 2) National Historic Landmarks Recommended for Amendment; 3) National Historic Landmarks Study List; and 4) National Register of Historic Places Study. Each listing notes the property's name and location, the property's associated event or individual, and a statement of the property's significance.

Labor-Related Properties Recognized as Nationally Significant

This section identifies those properties that are already designated as National Historic Landmarks and whose significance is currently recognized for association with labor. The properties are listed according to the labor theme established by this study with which it is the most closely associated.[1]

[1] Many of the properties listed in this section were designated before National Historic Landmark guidelines required the identification of specific eligibility criteria. The criteria provided for these properties, indicated with an asterisk, are approximate estimates based on staff review of the existing documentation.

Workplace: Working and Moving

Frederick A. and Sophia Bagg Bonanza Farm, Mooreton, North Dakota (NHL, 2005)
Criterion 1

Established in 1915, this exceptional example of a western bonanza farm illustrates the large-scale farming known as "farm factories" in the upper Midwest and central plains. During the late nineteenth century, these systems of agricultural mass production primarily grew wheat. The Bagg farm, however, illustrates a later phase of bonanza farms in which owners diversified crops. In addition to wheat, the Baggs also grew corn and sweet clover and raised sheep and hogs across 7,000 acres. Labor organization on these expansive agricultural tracts was modeled after industrial settings, with superintendents and foremen overseeing the daily work operations of large gangs of seasonal migrant laborers.

Colorado Fuel and Iron Company Administrative Complex, Pueblo, Colorado (NHL, 2021)
Criterion 1

As the company headquarters for the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I), this property is significant to labor and working-class history primarily because it is where CF&I officials developed policies that determined the living and working conditions affecting thousands of miners and their families. CF&I was the largest producer of coal and coke in the West for the first half of the twentieth century, and it was also the first "fully integrated" steel manufacturer in the western half of the United States. In 1915 the company developed the Employee Representation Plan (ERP), a system of welfare capitalism designed to improve living and working conditions for miners (and thwart industrial unionism) in the wake of the Ludlow Massacre. It was a system that various companies around the country adopted in the 1920s for similar purposes.

The Detroit Industry **Murals, Detroit, Michigan (NHL, 2013)**
Criterion 2

Diego Rivera's series of paintings, painted between 1932 and 1933 with funding largely from the Ford Motor Company, depicted the history of manufacturing in Detroit, with a special emphasis on the Ford River Rouge Plant. Known for his progressive politics and belief that art should be for the public, Rivera's Detroit murals depicted relationships between male workers—both African American and White—and machines, as well as workers and management. Rivera's artistic style and emphasis on public murals that he developed as a key member of the Mexican Mural Movement of the 1920s would have a significant influence on the mural program of the New Deal's Federal One programs under the Works Progress Administration.

Dudley Farm, Alachua County, Florida (NHL, 2021)
Criteria 1, 5

This farm, which was established in 1881, is significant for its association with southern agriculture during the post-Reconstruction era through the twentieth century. The site is also notable for illustrating female agricultural labor patterns, particularly regarding commercial poultry-raising during the 1930s. As an owner-operated farm, the property reveals how White

property owners engaged in agricultural labor alongside Black men and women farm workers. It also is significant for illustrating the racial violence that southern Black workers endured in the rural South: in 1916 local whites lynched Bert Dennis, Mary Dennis, Stella Young, Andrew McHenry, and Reverend Josh J. Baskins, an act of racial terrorism that was likely planned on the property and included the property owners.

Graniteville Historic District, Graniteville, South Carolina (NHL, 1978)
*Criteria 1, 5

Industrialist William Gregg, perhaps the most important figure in the development of cotton mills in the antebellum South, established a model mill and supervised construction of an adjoining town within this district. Constructed concurrently with the mills in 1845, the town of Graniteville would become the prototype of the southern cotton mill village. In it, Gregg practiced a form of welfare capitalism that would become common in southern mill towns during the twentieth century. The town included inexpensive housing, free education, religious institutions, and company stores. Gregg also closely monitored the personal lives of the workers in his town to ensure that they were complying with his strong moral code, a practice that often went hand-in-hand with welfare capitalism.

Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company Warehouse, Jersey City, New Jersey (NHL, 1978)
*Criteria 1, 4

Constructed as a regional manufacturing and distribution center, this Atlanta and Pacific Tea Company warehouse is the last remaining unaltered structure in what had been a five-building complex. As a manufacturing site of food production, its association with the largest retail grocer in the country for much of the twentieth century situates the warehouse in national rather than purely regional historical context.

Harmony Mills, Cohoes, New York (NHL, 1999)
Criterion 1

From the late 1860s through the 1880s, the Harmony Mills Company was one of the largest American producers of cotton fabric for printed calicoes and fine cotton muslins. The mill complex is largely intact, with a full range of mill building and housing types, as well as the power canal system. The NHL nomination cites the district as a key example of an all-inclusive textile mill complex of the nineteenth century that is not in New England (the region renowned for such complexes). The mill workers at Harmony Mills also played a role in nineteenth century efforts to organize the textile industry. In 1880, workers participated in the Harmony Mill Strike; they staged another strike in 1882, which gained national attention.

J.C. Lore Oyster House, Solomons, Maryland (NHL, 2001)
Criterion 1

Established in 1922, the J.C. Lore Oyster House was a significant seafood processing plant until 1978. J.C. Lore was a key supplier of oysters to both the Kroger and ACME grocery store chains and was responsible for popularizing the “Patuxent” brand of oysters throughout the Midwest. Currently part of the Calvert Marine Museum’s interpretation of regional commercial fisheries,

J.C. Lore is significant as a relatively unaltered marine industrial building of the early twentieth century. Furthermore, as a place of food production, the J.C. Lore Oyster House can enhance the historical understanding of the manufacture and sale of processed food products during the twentieth century.

Kake Cannery, Kake, Alaska (NHL, 1998)
Criteria 1, 5

This cannery illustrates trends and technology in the Pacific salmon canning industry from 1912-1940 and depicts broad national patterns of immigration and labor organization. Foreign contract labor consisting of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Mexican, and African American workers made salmon canning Alaska's largest industry in the first half of the twentieth century. The cannery also illustrates the kinds of services that industries in remote areas had to provide for workers. The Kake Cannery was, by necessity, a self-sufficient enterprise that provided all living needs for its labor force for the entirety of the salmon season.

Lightfoot Mill, Chester Springs, Pennsylvania (NHL, 2005)
Criteria 1, 4

Although not specifically nominated under the theme of labor history, this water-powered grist mill is exemplary for illustrating the labor-intensive process of flour production in the eighteenth century, prior to the technological advancements of automated milling. The remarkably intact power transmission system in the mill illustrates the processes of flour production prior to as well as after the introduction of automated technology.

Lowell Locks and Canals Historic District, Lowell, Massachusetts (NHL, 1978)
*Criterion 1

Covering a span of 125 acres encompassing unaltered waterways, mills, and machinery, this district is the most significant representation of early nineteenth-century industrial heritage, particularly related to the textile industry. The Merrimack Manufacturing Company, the earliest textile manufacturer in Lowell, established the city's status as the premier producer of calico in the country. In 1825, after a period of reorganization, the Hamilton Manufacturing Company took over and began to diversify the types of textiles produced in Lowell. Although not mentioned in the nomination form, the mills at Lowell established a pattern of employing young single women in the mills from nearby farming families. By the late nineteenth century, the mills of Lowell had shifted to employing immigrants for labor.

Magnolia Plantation, Derry, Louisiana (NHL, 2001)
Criteria 1, 5

Among the largest and most intact of plantation complexes, Magnolia Plantation's many slave cabins became homes of sharecropping families. Therefore, it also illustrates the transition from slave labor to the labor systems of sharecropping and tenant farming.

George Hunt Pendleton House, Cincinnati, Ohio (NHL, 1977)
*Criterion 2

Civil service reforms of the late nineteenth century profoundly shaped federal hiring practices that are still in effect today. In 1880 and again in 1882, George Hunt Pendleton introduced two Civil Service Reform bills to the US Congress. Although many members of Congress remained opposed to such reforms, voter pressure pushed them to pass the Pendleton bill in 1883, which established the Federal Civil Service Commission.

Pocahontas Mine No. 1, Pocahontas, Virginia (NHL, 1994)
Criterion 1

The discovery of a large seam of semi-bituminous coal led to the development of one of the richest coalfields in the country. Opened in 1882, the Pocahontas Mine attracted skilled miners to Virginia, both native born and immigrant, from the coalfields of Pennsylvania. New immigrants arriving from Germany and Hungary were recruited directly from the Castle Garden immigration center in New York City. In 1884, the mine was the site of a large-scale disaster when a massive explosion created a fire in which 114 miners were killed. A month later, after the mine was flooded and sealed, the bodies of the dead were removed and interred in a mass grave, which established the beginning of the Pocahontas Cemetery.

Rudolph Oyster House, West Sayville, New York (NHL, 2001)
Criterion 1

Identified as one of five nationally significant sites of oyster fishing and processing in the *Oyster Fisheries of the United States Theme Study*, the Rudolph Oyster House is a remarkable unaltered seafood packing plant of the early twentieth century. Currently the home of the Long Island Maritime Museum, the site illustrates the history of the major stages in oyster processing: culling, shucking, packing, and canning.

Shenandoah-Dives Mill, Silverton, Colorado (NHL, 2000)
Criterion 1

This site is the best example of an early twentieth-century flotation mill, illustrating important developments in mining practices. The Shenandoah-Dives Mill is part of the Silverton National Historic District (1965; expanded 1975) for mining heritage and vernacular architecture relating to mining. Constructed in 1929, the mill illustrates the unique features of early twentieth-century hard rock milling processes for extracting gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc.

W.A. Young and Sons Foundry and Machine Shop, Rices Landing, Pennsylvania (NHL, 2016)
Criteria 1, 4

A foundry and machine shop that did custom jobs, this property is an excellent example of a family-owned, small-scale shop from the early twentieth century. The property's collection of extant buildings along with tools from the industry during its period of significance (1900-1965) provide valuable insight into the work processes of its type. Small-scale shops like this one

existed alongside massive machine shops that supported the rise of industries like the railroad and coal extraction but have been historically overshadowed by their larger counterparts. Properties like this are critically important for illustrating the diversity of scale in machine shops during the early twentieth century and for revealing how the needs of smaller companies were served through the custom work of these venues.

West Point Foundry Archeological Site, Cold Spring, New York (NHL 2021)
Criteria 1, 6

There is often overlap between labor and industrial archeology and labor history (see *Labor Archeology of the Industrial Era* theme study), and certain sites suit the criteria for historical and archeological significance. This property, along with the Ludlow Tent Colony Site, is a significant example. The former West Point Foundry operated during the first half of the nineteenth century and played a key role in shaping and disseminating technological developments in the production of military equipment (e.g., cannons and ammunition) to both the Army and Navy. The site employed both skilled and low-wage workers, some of whom were housed on the property.

Rio Vista Bracero Reception Center, Socorro, Texas (approved by the NHL committee, 2021)
Criterion 1

As noted in the chapter on agricultural labor in this theme study, the Mexican Farm Labor Program, known as the bracero program, was a significant and highly controversial initiative that had a profound effect on patterns of labor and labor activism in western agriculture during the mid-twentieth century. Bracero workers constituted almost 25 percent of agricultural labor in the country by the end of the 1950s. However, the male braceros were often subject to exploitation and the program adversely affected efforts to organize farmworkers in the West. As one of five recruitment centers along the US-Mexico border, this property outstandingly illustrates the recruitment of bracero workers and their placement on farms for the duration of their labor contracts from 1951 until the termination of the program in 1964.

Community: Living and Dying

Boley Historic District, Boley, Oklahoma (NHL, 1975)
*Criterion 1

In 1903, the town of Boley was founded as an entirely African American community. Advertising the town as a site free from racial oppression, where African Americans were able to practice local self-governance, Thomas M. Haynes, the townsite manager, drew African American migrants from across the South. While its origins were rooted in a camp for African American railroad workers, Boley soon expanded to include a commercial center. In addition, many of the town's residents engaged in agricultural work—small-scale farming as well as farming cotton as a cash crop.

Calumet Historic District (Calumet Unit, Keweenaw National Historical Park), Calumet, Michigan (NHL, 1989)
Criterion 1

During the 1870s, the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company mined 50 percent of America's copper. Its company town, Calumet, is a significant example of corporate-sponsored community planning and paternalism designed to prevent unionism. It also encompasses the memorial to the Italian Hall Disaster of 1913. In the summer of 1913, the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) helped organize a strike at the Calumet and Helca Mining Company. That winter, the WFM women's auxiliary organized a Christmas Eve party for the mining families. At one point during the festivities, someone falsely yelled "fire" into the second-floor hall where the party was taking place. Seventy-four people (including sixty children) were crushed and died in the resulting panicked rush for the exit doors.

Cambria Iron Company, Johnstown, Pennsylvania (NHL, 1989)
Criteria 1, 4

Started in 1852, the Cambria Iron Company was one of the first modern and most significant iron- and steelworks in the United States. As an industrial center, it attracted recent immigrants to the region. The poor wages and working conditions, coupled with long hours, led workers to participate in major strikes, like the disastrous Great Steel Strike of 1919, before becoming organized under the United Steel Workers in 1941.

El Centro Español de Tampa, Tampa, Florida (NHL, 1988)
Criterion 1

As the best extant example of a Spanish ethnic and cultural club along the Gulf Coast of the United States, El Centro Español was the premier club for the Spanish elite of Ybor City, located outside of Tampa, Florida, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although Spanish immigrants were not the largest ethnic group in Ybor, they held the highest social and economic status in the cigar city. Beginning in 1891, El Centro Español provided recreational activities and built cooperative medical facilities for its members. Its success made El Centro Español a model that other ethnic groups in the city used when establishing their own cultural clubs.

Harrisville Historic District, Harrisville (and environs), New Hampshire (NHL, 1977)
Criteria 1 and 5

This district is an excellent example of a nineteenth-century mill village, having become a manufacturing center of woolen goods in 1799. The Harrisville Historic District is a relatively unaltered community, with company-built structures illustrating the kind of social engineering and industrial planning of New England mill villages. As the community grew during the mid-nineteenth century, most of the unskilled workers were single men and women who came from nearby towns. The company initially housed these workers in dormitory-style structures, before building tenements for families that eventually grew into the village that remains today.



Harris Mill, Harrisville, NH, 1969 *(Jack Boucher, LOC P&P HABS NH-171)*

Port Gamble Historic District, Port Gamble, Washington (NHL, 1978)
*Criterion 1

As the best example of a lumber town in the Pacific Northwest during the second half of the nineteenth century, Port Gamble provides insight into the process of lumber extraction and manufacturing, along with the development of a lumber-based community. A majority of the early workers in this district came from timber areas in Maine, and the town that developed in Port Gamble was designed to reflect the conditions with which workers had been familiar on the East Coast. The company also hired Native Americans to work in the mills, and this site illustrates the interactions among a diverse workforce in industrial communities.

Pullman Historic District, Chicago, Illinois (NHL, 1970; National Monument, 2015)
Criteria 1 and 5

Pullman is distinguished as a model company town built between 1880 and 1884 for industrialist George Pullman to attract the thousands of skilled workers he needed to build and repair railroad cars and to create a more efficient work force. Pullman also played an important role in labor history when the town became engulfed in the American Railway Union (ARU) strike in 1894. The strike soon spread across the country; President Grover Cleveland eventually dispatched federal troops to suppress the strike. This intervention had a larger impact on labor organization more generally, for it was the first time that the 1890 Sherman Anti-Trust Act had been employed to crush union activity, and the ARU was destroyed. Over thirty years later, the predominantly male, African American porters organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) at Pullman in 1925. Led by A. Philip Randolph, the BSCP was both a union as well as a civil rights organization that fought against discrimination within both the Pullman Company and the American Federation of Labor.

Tenement Building at 97 Orchard Street, New York, New York (NHL, 1994)
Criteria 1 and 4

As the current home of the Tenement Museum, the property at 97 Orchard Street was an apartment building in which thousands of immigrants lived and worked from 1864, the year that construction of the stucture was completed, through the mid-1930s, when the building became

vacant. The structure itself retains the character-defining features of a working-class neighborhood, precisely because of its lack of adornment and architectural distinctiveness. As a vernacular stucture, it is representitive of patterns of immigration and illustrates urban, ethnic working-class life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Ybor City Historic District, Tampa, Florida (NHL, 1990)
Criterion 1

Looking to escape the organizing efforts of Cuban cigar workers in Key West, cigar manufacturer Vicente Martinez Ybor moved his business to an area outside Tampa in 1885; soon, Ybor City would become a cigarmaking center in the United States. During its first several decades in the late nineteenth century, Ybor City was a staunchly ethnic enclave, heavily dominated by Cuban immigrants. The high percentage of Cubans in the work force infused the community of Ybor with Cuban cultural traditions. They also influenced the working experience on the shop floor by instituting the Cuban practice of hiring *lectores* to read to workers from a raised platform as they sat at long tables rolling cigars; the reading material often provided the latest information on labor activism. Often, workers put what the *lectores* read into practice, for the cigar industry in Tampa experienced numerous strikes during the decades from the 1880s through the 1930s, with major work stoppages occurring in 1899, 1901, 1910, 1920, and 1931.

Recreation: Playing and Praying

Braddock Carnegie Library, Braddock, Pennsylvania (NHL, 2012)
Criterion 1

Constructed in 1889, the Braddock Library was the first library that steel magnate Andrew Carnegie established in the United States. Built in close proximity to his first steel mill, Carnegie intended the Braddock Library to improve the lives of his largely immigrant workforce and their families through educational enrichment. Eventually, Carnegie's efforts led to the construction of 1,679 Carnegie libraries across the country in small towns, communities, and cities where there was a need for a local library.

Oliver H. Kelley Homestead, Elk River, Minnesota (NHL, 1964)
Criteria 1, 2

As the founder of the Order of the Patrons of Husbandry (the National Grange) in 1867, Oliver H. Kelley established one of the first national organizations to educate farmers and provide social activities for agrarian communities. Modeled after the Masons, the National Grange began as a secret organization that included women as fulltime members. As it grew, the organization became more invested in advocating for farmers' interests, specifically by organizing cooperatives and fighting railroad exploitation.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission Chapel, San Jose, California (NHL, 2016)
*Criteria 1, 2

The Guadalupe Mission Chapel is closely associated with Cesar Chavez, one of the most significant Latino labor leaders in U.S. history. The building served as a parish church and

community center for the Community Service Organization (CSO), a Mexican American civil rights organization. It also played an important role in the effort to organize Mexican farmworkers into the United Farm Workers, illustrating the important intersection between struggles for labor rights and civil rights for Latino Americans.

Education: Teaching and Learning

Oakland Chapel, Alcorn University, Alcorn, Mississippi (NHL, 1976)
*Criterion 1

Founded in 1871, Alcorn University was established as the first African American land grant college under the Reconstruction Government of Mississippi. The school trained students to become agricultural teachers, farmers' advisors, and home economics instructors, which was critical in disseminating agricultural education among African American farmers in the South. The school suffered from a lack of state support, but survived by securing funding from the Department of Agriculture.

Porter Farm, Terrell, Texas (NHL, 1964)
*Criteria 1, 2

The site of one of the earliest agricultural cooperatives, the Porter Farm became nationally significant in 1903 when demonstrations there led to the beginning of the Agricultural Extension Service. At the Porter Farm, Dr. Seaman A. Knapp led the first demonstration of farming practices designed to thwart the spread of the boll weevil, a pest that had been devastating cotton crops. From that point on, the Porter Farm became a demonstration area to educate regional farmers on improved farming techniques.

Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Alabama (NHL, 1965)
*Criteria 1, 2

In 1881, Booker T. Washington established a state-chartered normal school in Tuskegee, Alabama. Tuskegee Institute became a premier regional center for academic and industrial training for African American men and women. Although Washington vocally adhered to racial segregation, most notably in a speech delivered at the 1895 Atlanta Cotton Exposition, he sought to improve the economic conditions of African Americans and advocated vocational and agricultural work as a means for doing so. George Washington Carver became the director of the agricultural department in 1886. Washington's expertise in botany and soil enrichment turned the experimental farm at Tuskegee into a model for demonstrating high-yield crops.

Labor Movement: Organizing and Struggling

American Federation of Labor Building, Washington, DC (NHL, 1974)
Criterion 1

For over thirty years, this building, known as the "National Labor Temple," served as headquarters for the American Federation of Labor, the union considered the major spokesman for organized skilled workers in the United States. Constructed between 1915 and 1916, the

building was intentionally designed to showcase the significant role the American Federation of Labor played in the American labor movement.

Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Martinsburg Shops, Martinsburg, West Virginia (NHL, 2003)
Criteria 1, 4

While this complex is significant for illustrating innovative engineering and industrial architectural practices of the nineteenth century, it also played a key role in one of the first national uprisings in labor history. During July of 1877, workers at the Martinsburg shops, whose wages had just been cut by 10 percent in the midst of an economic depression, went on strike to demand higher pay. Soon, the strike spread among railroad workers, as well as workers in other industries that had also been subject to wage reductions, with over one hundred thousand workers joining the effort within days. The strike spread from Martinsburg and Baltimore across the country to San Francisco, including a number of major cities. This strike marked the beginning of a long period of bitter and violent labor strife in the United States.

Bost Building, Homestead, Pennsylvania (NHL, 1999)
Criterion 1

This building served as union headquarters in the 1892 Battle of Homestead, a major confrontation between labor and capital in which the Carnegie Steel Company victory effectively destroyed unionism in the steel industry until the formation of the United Steel Workers under the Congress of Industrial Organizations. The battle was the culmination of a strike and lockout that pitted the interests of Andrew Carnegie, a leading industrial magnate, against those of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, which had been one of the strongest labor unions of the nineteenth century.

Pietro and Maria Botto House, Haledon, New Jersey (NHL, 1982)
*Criterion 1

From the second-story balcony of this home of Italian immigrants, leaders of the Industrial Workers of the World addressed striking workers, their leaders, and visitors every Sunday during the five-month 1913 Paterson Silk Mill strike. Some 25,000 largely minority silk workers were protesting low wages and demanded an eight-hour day, in addition to seeking control over the rate of production. Some 300 factories shut down in Paterson, which was then the country's silk manufacturing capital. Paterson manufacturers eventually defeated the workers, and the strike is viewed as one of the IWWs most significant failures due to mill management entrenchment and the IWW's refusal to compromise. However, IWW strikes in places like Paterson received nationwide publicity, stirred the American social conscience, and helped lay the groundwork eventually leading to such reforms as minimum wages, the 40-hour week, and child labor laws.

Butte-Anaconda Historic District, Walkerville, Anaconda, and Butte, Montana (NHL, 1961; revised documentation, 2006)
Criteria 1, 4, 5

The historic resources of this district collectively comprise a remarkable landscape representing nationally significant themes of industrial extraction and labor conflict in the United States. During a period of rapid industrialization, Butte-Anaconda helped to spearhead the rise of two prominent unions: the Western Federation of Miners and the International Workers of the World. At the turn of the century, Butte was known as the "Gibraltar of Unionism," with the largest local union in the United States—over 6,000 members. The region is also renowned for a darker history. In 1917, Frank Little, an organizer for the IWW, was lynched from a local trestle for his labor organizing activities. That same year, the district gained national attention when the Granite Mountain/Speculator Mine experienced a massive fire that killed 163 miners.



Miner's Union Building and former rooming houses, Butte, MT, 1979 *(Jet Lowe, LOC P&P HAER MT-35-20)*

Eugene V. Debs Home, Terre Haute, Indiana (NHL, 1966)
Criterion 2

A railroad worker, Debs organized the American Railway Union (ARU) in June of 1893 and is known as one of the founders of industrial unionism in the United States. In 1894, Debs led a strike of the ARU against the Pullman Palace Car Company over wage cuts. The Pullman strike paralyzed the American rail network, and the federal government obtained an injunction against the strikers for obstructing US mail. The strike collapsed in 1897, leading to the union's disbanding, but Debs would continue to fight for the rights of working-class Americans as the Socialist Party presidential candidate, running in five presidential elections: from 1900 to 1912, and again in 1920.

The Forty Acres, Delano, California (NHL, 2008)
Criteria 1 and 2

This parcel of land is associated with César Chávez, the preeminent leader of the farm worker movement that began in 1962. The movement produced the United Farm Workers of America (UFW), the first permanent agricultural labor union in the United States and the organization

responsible for the passage of the first law in the country to recognize the collective bargaining rights of farm workers, the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975. The predominantly Mexican American UFW collaborated with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, a predominantly Filipino union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor led by Larry Itliong, during the Delano Grape Strike of 1965.

Samuel Gompers House, Washington, DC (NHL, 1974)
Criterion 2

From 1902-1917, this house was the home of Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor from 1886 until his death in 1924. As president of the largest trade union organization in the world, Gompers helped to secure higher wages, reduced hours, and improved working conditions for American workers.

Haymarket Martyrs' Monument, Forest Park, Illinois (NHL, 1997)
Criteria 1, 2 & Exceptions 4, 7

In 1886 a bomb exploded during a workers' rally in Chicago's Haymarket square, killing several police officers. Eight German anarchists were arrested, and four were hanged. These four "martyrs" of labor were buried beneath this monument six years after their deaths, helping it to become an icon for both the labor and radical movements. Workers continue to visit the monument in tribute to its central role in labor history. According to Paul Avrich, author of a book on the Haymarket tragedy, the Haymarket monument has become both a shrine and a site of pilgrimage for radicals and labor leaders from all over the world. Thus, it has acquired its own national significance as a commemorative place, in addition to its significance for its association with the Haymarket Square incident.

Ludlow Tent Colony Site, Ludlow, Colorado (NHL, 2009)
Criteria 1, 6

The Ludlow Tent Colony Site is the location of the Ludlow Massacre of 1914, a battle between striking miners and the Colorado National Guard during a strike that began the previous year. On the night of April 20, 1914, a fire was deliberately set among the tents of striking workers and their families, which caused the deaths of two women and eleven children who had sought safety in a crude cellar underneath one of the tents. In 1918, the United Mine Workers of America erected a monument here to honor those who died. Archeological remains from the conflict hold the potential to address nationally significant questions concerning the living conditions of strikers.

Matewan Historic District, Matewan, West Virginia (NHL, 1997)
Criterion 1

The town of Matewan is recognized as nationally significant for its role in the West Virginia Mine Wars of 1920-21. This "war" was an armed battle that culminated from of a series of coal strikes. Striking workers demanded company recognition of the United Mine Workers of America, which led to the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain in Logan County, West Virginia. This battle was the most violent episode in the history of the labor movement, pitting an estimated

7,000 to 10,000 union miners against local law enforcement, hired guns, and volunteers. The uprising over the mountainous terrain only came to an end when then-president Warren Harding intervened by dispatching 2,100 federal troops.

Kate Mullany House, Troy, New York (NHL, 1998)
Criteria 1, 2

This house was home to America's most prominent female labor leaders, who gained recognition for successfully bargaining with laundry owners in the all-female Collar Laundry Union in the 1860s. Male unionists recognized Mullany's group as the only bona fide female union in the country.

Frances Perkins House, Washington, DC (NHL, 1991)
Criterion 2

Francis Perkins served as the Secretary of Labor throughout Franklin Roosevelt's twelve-year presidency and was the nation's first female cabinet officer. She is considered the driving force behind many of the New Deal programs on which today's federal social safety net is based—unemployment insurance, workers compensation, and Social Security. She is also credited for her contributions to the Fair Labor Standards Act (1938), for establishing the minimum wage, for prohibiting child labor in most workplaces, and for influencing parts of the National Recovery Act (1933), which recognized the rights of workers to organize into unions for collective bargaining.

Perkins Homestead, Newcastle, Maine (NHL, 2013)
Criterion 2

Frances Perkins became Secretary of Labor during the Great Depression and helped create and administer landmark legislation to relieve the nation's economic crisis, including a law guaranteeing the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively. She was also highly influential in the Congressional passage of the Social Security Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act, which created a minimum wage and restricted child labor nationwide. This farm was owned by her family for more than 250 years and was her summer residence throughout her life. It was also the site of a thriving local brickyard on the Damarascotta River that was active during her childhood.

Terence V. Powderly House, Scranton, Pennsylvania (NHL, 1966)
*Criterion 2

This house was the long-time home of Terence Vincent Powderly, who headed the Knights of Labor as the Grand Master Workman of the organization from 1879-1893. He became the best-known leader of the Knights. As the nation's first successful trade union organization, the Knights of Labor made labor a potent political force. Beginning in 1869, the Knights of Labor was unique in its acceptance of women and African Americans as members, although it also reflected the nativism of the era by supporting the Chinese Exclusion Act.

Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Building, New York, New York (NHL, 1991)
Criterion 1

On March 15, 1911, this building was the site of one of the worst industrial disasters in American history, killing 146 workers. Most were women. The tragedy shocked the nation and galvanized the labor movement to press for progressive factory legislation. The newly formed New York Factory Investigation Commission succeeded in lobbying for pioneering safety and health measures. The fire is credited with changing both factory and fire prevention laws throughout the nation.

Socialist Labor Party Hall, Barre, Vermont (NHL, 2000)
Criterion 1

The Socialist Labor Party Hall was founded in April 1876 and was the first socialist political party with a national scope in the United States. During the early twentieth century, the organization's national office operated at several locations in the New York City area, but they never built their own building. This hall is the only known surviving property that was actually established and constructed by the Socialist Labor Party. Barre, Vermont, was a leading location for debates among anarchists, socialists, and union leaders about the future direction of the labor movement in America, and the Socialist Labor Party Hall was the location for many of these debates. As a resource that was constructed and supported largely by Italian granite cutters in 1900, the property is also significant for illustrating ethnic working-class history and political radicalism.

United Mine Workers Building, Washington, DC (NHL, 2005)
Criteria 1, 2 & Exception 6

This building served as the headquarters for the United Mine Workers of America during the American labor movement's height of political and economic influence, and as office to union president John L. Lewis (1937-1960). Lewis helped spark labor's climb to a position of national influence by shaping a key section of President Roosevelt's National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933, which federally enforced workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively. He also founded the Congress of Industrial Organization, which included mass-production workers who were unrepresented in the American Federation of Labor and who became the labor movement's most important constituency during the 1950s and 1960s, when working-class Americans made their largest gains.

Union Square, New York, New York (NHL, 1998)
Criterion 1

As a major gathering place for pro-labor demonstrations and marches, Union Square was a symbol of the labor movement from the late nineteenth century through the twentieth century. According to many historians, the first Labor Day parade took place there on September 5, 1882. This event helped to initiate the labor movement's drive for federal legislation to set aside one day annually in observance of American workers' contributions and achievements. By the early twentieth century, Union Square became renowned as a place where labor radicals rallied the public to support labor activism.

Jefferson County Courthouse, Charlestown, West Virginia (approved by the NHL Committee, 2021)
Criterion 1

The Jefferson County Courthouse was the site of the initial treason trials of miners who participated in the March to Logan County, West Virginia. Union marchers organized outside the state capital in Charleston with the intention of freeing miners imprisoned during a strike in 1921. The march culminated in a pitched battle, known as the Battle of Blair Mountain, between the army of miners and a counterforce amassed by local sheriff Don Chafin. The battle ended with the intervention of federal troops. The state of West Virginia indicted hundreds of miners on charges of treason against the state during the winter of 1922. Two initial treason trials and one murder trial were held at the Jefferson County Courthouse, which had also been the site of the treason trial of abolitionist John Brown. The United Mine Workers and labor sympathizers supported the miners on trial and closely watched the proceedings, fearing that guilty verdicts would further weaken the already struggling labor movement. The intense media attention the trials received turned a national spotlight on the hardships miners in West Virginia endured in their efforts to organize—hardships that were endemic to the mining industry across the country.

National Historic Landmarks Recommended for Amendment

The following properties are designated National Historic Landmarks and relate to the theme of labor history as presented in this study, but that are currently not recognized for this aspect of their national significance. They are recommended as possible candidates for updated NHL documentation that would include potential recognition of national significance related to labor history. Arranged by the industry types highlighted in each chapter of the study, these properties may be found to exemplify particular labor processes, illustrate key events in labor history, or relate to important figures in the labor movement.

Manufacture

Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Facility, Auburn, Indiana (NHL, 2005)
This automobile manufacturing plant is currently recognized as historically significant under the category “Developing the American Economy” and the subfields of Business, Transportation, and Technology. While the nomination cites the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Facility as being “nationally significant as one of the few remaining examples of an independent specialty automobile company that made hand-assembled rather than mass-produced automobiles” during the first three decades of the twentieth century, the importance of skilled labor in this plant is not included in the official designation. The nomination could be revised to explore how specialized, skilled labor continued to play a role in the automobile industry even after the introduction of the moving assembly line.

Boston Manufacturing Company, Waltham, Massachusetts (NHL, 1977)
Founded in 1813 as one of the first modern factories in the United States, the property is notable for inaugurating modern methods of textile production that revolutionized the textile industry in the United States. The nomination could be revised to explore how this technological development enabled the reorganization of conditions on the factory floor, which profoundly shaped the development of labor patterns in the textile industry.

Carrie Blast Furnaces Number 6 and 7, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania (NHL, 2006)
Built in 1906-1907, Carrie Blast Furnaces 6 and 7 are the only remaining pre-World War II-era blast furnaces in the Pittsburgh District, the nation's largest iron and steel production district for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The existing resources illustrate how furnace technologies adapted to suit changing engineering theories, raw material supplies, and increasingly mechanized operations during the pre-war years. These advances were critical to the development of mass production in the American steel industry and profoundly shaped patterns of labor in the steel industry, making Pittsburgh the leading iron and steel manufacturing district in the world.

Elkins Coal and Coke Company Historic District, Bretz, West Virginia (NHL, 1983)
Coke—coal that has had its volatile material such as tar, oils, and gas eliminated—is an essential ingredient in iron and steel production. The Elkins Coal and Coke Company began in 1907, chiefly supplying the massive Sparrow's Point Steel Mills of Baltimore County, Maryland, with coke. Properties like these provide the opportunity to explore the labor of an important aspect of the coal and steel industries.



Elkins Coal and Coke Company, Bretz vicinity, WV, 1974 *(William E. Barrett LOC P&P HAER WV-7)*

Ford River Rouge Complex, Dearborn, Michigan (NHL, 1978)
This complex was designated a National Historic Landmark for its significance in industrial history as the place where automaker Henry Ford achieved his dream of a nonstop, continuous production line. Consideration should be given to amending this nomination to include the complex's significance in labor history, particularly as a destination for African American and Mexican American workers. Furthermore, in 1941, a wildcat strike at this plant finally forced Ford to recognize the United Auto Workers. The Ford Motor Company was the last major automobile manufacturer to do so, ending Ford's longstanding struggle against unionization.

Gruber Wagon Works, Reading, Pennsylvania (NHL, 1977)
As the best remaining structure related to the wagon industry, which was a major industry in the United States, the Gruber Wagon Works is significant for both manufacturing and transportation history. As an example of a family-owned business, the Gruber Wagon Works provides insight into the significant role that small factories played in the history of wagon production in the United States and the labor processes of this industry.



Gruber Wagon Works, Reading, PA, c. 1895 and 1973 *(Wm. Edmund Barrett, LOC P&P, HAER PA-14)*

Highland Park Ford Plant, Highland Park, Michigan (NHL, 1978)
From 1910 to 1927, this property was the primary manufacturing center for Ford Motor Company. Significant as the site where Henry Ford implemented and refined the moving assembly line, it also was a destination for the first generation of southern African American laborers who participated in the Great Migration seeking greater economic opportunities in northern industrial centers. Furthermore, as the site where Ford implemented the Five Dollar a Day plan, this plant illustrates an important period in the history of labor organizing efforts in the automobile manufacturing industry.

George T. Stagg Distillery, Frankfort, Kentucky (NHL, 2013)
This fifty-acre site contains a highly intact whiskey distillery that is nationally significant for its association with the growth of whiskey production after the end of Prohibition. While the distillery predates the Repeal era, it is particularly important for illustrating the post-Repeal architectural and technological advancements in large-scale whiskey distilleries. Although the theme study does not specifically mention distilleries, properties like these are significant for illustrating the history of the production and labor of spirits in the United States. In addition to this property, similar properties for potential amendment include Bromberger's Distillery, Newmanstown, Pennsylvania (NHL, 1980) and Burk's Distillery, Marion, Kentucky (NHL, 1980)

Milton S. Hershey Mansion, Hershey, Pennsylvania (NHL, 1983)
As the primary residence of Milton Hershey from 1908 to 1945, it was here that Hershey designed not only his chocolate empire, but also the town that housed the workers of the Hershey facilities. The company town of Hershey is unique because it provides an opportunity to explore the design of a company town not related to textile production or extractive work. It also directly illustrates how company towns and the industries to which they were connected adapted to the economic conditions of the Depression.

Pillsbury "A" Mill, Minneapolis, Minnesota (NHL, 1979)
Constructed in 1881, the Pillsbury "A" Mill was the largest and the most technologically advanced flourmill of its era. While the nomination details the exceptionally high level of flour that the mill produced, it falls short of detailing the labor that went into this production. This mill provides a key opportunity to explore the history of labor processes at a large-scale flour facility during the late nineteenth century.

Sloss Furnace, Birmingham, Alabama (NHL, 1981)
Built between 1881 and 1882, this property was designated a National Historic Landmark under the topic of industrial heritage for its association with diversifying the South's post-Civil War economy. Further study should be considered for its association with advances made in African American labor in the 1930s by the Congress of Industrial Organizations and its efforts to gain democracy for workers of all races.

Watkins Woolen Mill, Excelsior Springs, Missouri (NHL, 1983)
In 1861, the Watkins Woolen Mill became the local supplier of woolen cloth and yarn in the region. As an early textile mill in the Midwest this property provides the potential to explore the early development of the region's textile industry and how this nascent industry interacted with local populations. While much work has been done in this regard for woolen textile mills in the Northeast, a similar study of the Watkins Mill could provide a cross-regional comparison of labor processes and community life for the workers who labored within its walls.



Watkins Woolen Mill, Excelsior Springs, MO, 1978 *(Jet Lowe, LOC P&P, HAER MO-1)*

W. T. Blackwell and Company Tobacco Factory, Durham, North Carolina (NHL, 1977)
Tobacco farming and manufacturing historically played an important role in developing the economy of tobacco-growing regions. In the 1880s, this factory, known by its brand name Bull Durham, became the largest tobacco manufacturer in the world. While tobacco, particularly in cigarette form, had a profound impact on American culture and the economy, it also involved a unique form of manufacturing labor that should be explored within the context of these properties. Another NHL related to this industry, which could be similarly updated, is the Duke Homestead and Tobacco Factory, Durham, North Carolina (NHL, 1977).

Saugus Iron Works, Saugus, Massachusetts (NHL, 1963)
This iron works, which dates to the seventeenth century, was the first "sustained, integrated iron works" in the country, according to its landmark nomination. Not only was it a site of technological advancement in iron production, but it also served as a training center for iron workers, both immigrant and native-born. These workers went on to establish new iron works throughout New England and the upper Mid-Atlantic regions. While the landmark designation currently acknowledges the property's significance in United States labor history, the

information provided could be expanded to more fully explore its importance in the evolution of labor practices in the American iron industry.

Cornwall Iron Furnace, Lebanon County, Pennsylvania (NHL, 1966)
As the earliest and one of the most regionally important iron manufacturers from the eighteenth through nineteenth centuries, Cornwall Furnace is significant to the early history of iron production in the United States. Situated near the Cornwall iron ore deposit, which was so large that it spurred development of numerous furnaces through the nineteenth century, the Cornwall Furnace helped to inaugurate iron production in Pennsylvania. In addition to being a significant work site of iron production, there were several workers' villages that developed around this industry. The nomination recognizes Burd Coleman Village as one such area, which may be eligible for listing on the National Register; further study of Coleman Furnace may also determine that this working-class community of iron workers should be included in the landmark boundary.

Columbus Riverfront Industrial District, Columbus, Georgia (NHL, 1978)
Harnessing the hydro-technological potential of the Chattahoochee River, the city of Columbus, Georgia, became an industrial center of the region during the nineteenth century. Included in this riverfront district are former textile mills (Columbus was one of the earliest centers for textile production in the region), a gristmill, and an iron works. The city's ability to rebuild the mills lost during the Civil War rendered it a key example of the region's industrial potential, according to New South boosters. The current nomination provides a broad historical overview of the industrial district from a business perspective, but it does not include any details about the workers who worked in and lived near this district.

Extractive

Bingham Canyon Mine, outside Salt Lake City, Utah (NHL, 1984)
This property is recognized as nationally significant for being the first open-pit copper mine in the world. It opened as such in 1904, although metal mining had been conducted at the site since the mid-nineteenth century. The existing nomination is short and does not explore labor processes. Updated documentation could inform how the property potentially pioneered open-pit copper mining labor practices in the United States.



Bingham Canyon Mine, outside Salt Lake City, UT, 1973 *(Jack E. Boucher, LOC P&P, HAER UT-21)*

Mountain Iron Mine, St. Louis County, Minnesota (NHL, 1978)
There are several NHLs associated with metal mining in the United States during the nineteenth century, especially along the Vermilion Range in northern Minnesota. Several of these properties could be updated to include their significance in the history of labor in iron mining. They include: the Mountain Iron Mine, which operated as an open pit mine for iron ore from 1892-1956; the Soudon Iron Mine, St. Louis County, Minnesota (NHL, 1979), which began operations in 1884 and ended them in 1962; and the Hull-Rust-Mahoning Open Pit Mine, St. Louis County, Minnesota, (NHL 1966), which opened in 1895. As with the Bingham Canyon Mine, the nominations for these properties lack information on the labor processes of metal mining. Furthermore, the Vermilion iron mines were destinations for ethnic workers, particularly Finnish immigrants, and the nominations should reflect the ethnic working-class communities that they established, along with the contributions these workers made in efforts to unionize the iron mines of the region.

Port Gamble District, Port Gamble, Washington (NHL, 1966)
As the best example of a lumber town in the Pacific Northwest during the late nineteenth century, Port Gamble provides insight into the process of lumber extraction and manufacturing, along with the development of a lumber-based community. A majority of the early workers in this district came from timber areas in Maine, and the town of Port Gamble was designed to reflect the conditions with which workers had been familiar on the East Coast. The company also hired Native Americans to work in the mills, and this property illustrates the interactions among a diverse workforce in industrial communities.

Portland Brownstone Quarries, Portland, Connecticut (NHL 2000)
The Portland Brownstone Quarries were the main source of the distinctive reddish-brown sandstone called "brownstone." This material was used so extensively in building construction during the late nineteenth century that this period has become known as the "Brownstone Era" in some areas. Quarrying brownstone and other materials, such as blue slate, constituted an important industry in the United States. This nomination could be updated to highlight the labor involved in this extractive work.



Erie Canal, Schoharie Creek Aqueduct and Yankee Hill Lock Number 28, Fort Hunter, NY, 1969
(Jack E. Boucher, LOC P&P, HAER NY-6, NY-16)

Transportation

Erie Canal, Montgomery County, New York (NHL, 1960)
The history of canals, especially the labor that went into their construction, is a focal point of the Transportation chapter in this study. Canal construction came of age during the 1820s; the success of the 364-mile Erie Canal prompted cities and towns throughout the United States to construct regional canals to capitalize on this transportation revolution. To do so required a massive workforce. Initially, this workforce consisted of enslaved labor in the South and free, largely immigrant and predominantly Irish, labor in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. Although this study provides an overview of the labor involved in this industry, the particular historical details of the processes and conditions of canal work can be best told through the individual landmarks of the canal industry. The struggles of unskilled canal workers during the nineteenth century and the communities that developed from this form of labor are subjects that might be represented by such properties. Existing canal-related NHL nominations that could be updated to improve their representation of labor history include: the Miami and Erie "Deep Cut" Canal (NHL, 1964), Delaware Canal (NHL, 1976), Ohio and Erie Canal (NHL, 1983), Historic Augusta Canal and Industrial District (NHL, 1977), Potomac (Potowmack) Canal Historic District (NHL, 1982), Delaware and Hudson Canal (NHL, 1968) St. Mary's Falls Canal (NHL, 1966), and the New York Barge Canal (NHL, 2016).

Nevada Northern Railway, East Ely Yards, Ely, Nevada (NHL, 2005)
The East Ely Yards of the Nevada Northern Railway is the best preserved, least altered, and most complete main yard complex of a historic standard gauge, common carrier, steam-era railroad. It was established in 1905 to support the area's booming copper mining industry. This facility's geographical isolation allowed it to escape the major alterations and demolitions that similar facilities faced during the dieselization of the railroad industry during the second half of the twentieth century. As such, it provides an excellent opportunity to explore the labor processes and conditions of the railroad industry during this period.

Pullman Historic District, Chicago, Illinois (NHL, 1970)
Pullman possesses two distinctions of exceptional national importance. Constructed between 1880 and 1884, it is distinguished as a model company town and is the location of the countrywide 1894 Pullman strike, which resulted in executive presidential intervention and the first use of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act (1890) prohibiting restraint of interstate trade to quash the unions. Documentation in the NHL nomination should be updated to current standards with particular attention paid to the evaluation and counting of resources, the demarcation of boundaries, and the strengthening of the labor history aspect.

Service

A. T. Stewart Store, "Sun Building," New York, New York (NHL, 1978)
A.T. Stewart, widely recognized as the figure responsible for conceptualizing the modern department store, had this building constructed in 1845 and then significantly remodeled in 1850. The property is deemed significant for its architecture and relationship to the history of commerce, but it should also be recognized for establishing a model for the division of retail labor into modern departments. This property is also important for shaping patterns of retail work. It is one of several prominent department store landmark nominations that could be

amended to include their significance in the history of retail labor. Other notable examples include the: Carson, Pirie, Scott Company Store, Chicago, Illinois (NHL, 1975); Van Allen and Company Department Store, Clinton, Iowa (NHL, 1976); R. H. Macy and Company Store, New York, New York (NHL, 1978); John Wanamaker Store, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (NHL, 1978); and the Marshall Field and Company Store, Chicago, Illinois (NHL, 1978).

Agriculture

Market Hall and Sheds, Charleston, South Carolina (NHL, 1973)
Constructed in 1841, the Charleston Market Hall is formally recognized for its architectural significance, being an excellent extant example of Greek Revival commercial architecture. The market's original function was as a public market where local residents could purchase beef, fish, and produce from local vendors.



Market Hall and Sheds, Charleston, SC, 1978 *(Charles N. Bayless, LOC P&P, HABS SC-135, SC-135D)*

General

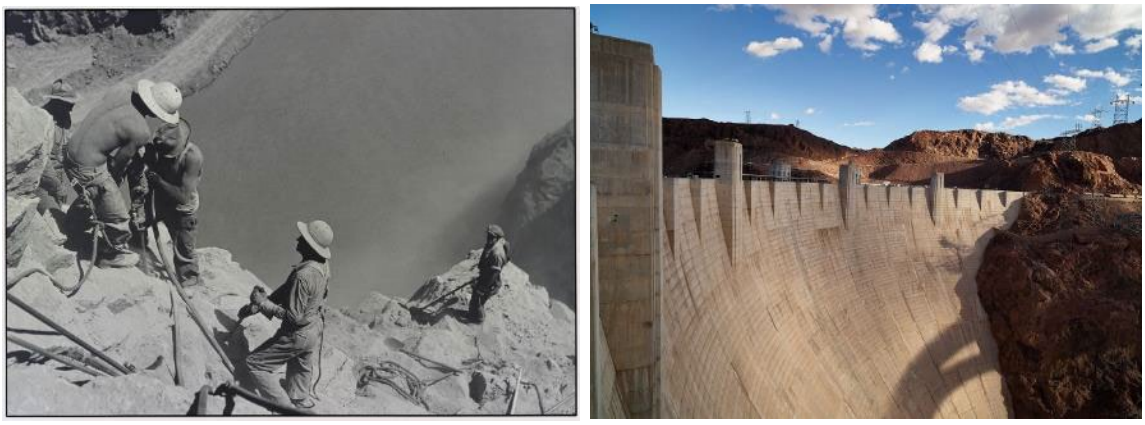
New Century Guild, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (NHL, 1993)
Founded in 1882, the Guild was one of the earliest, largest and most successful organizations created to deal with issues that arose for working women. The organization supported working women's needs with classes, a library, and a health insurance plan. Consideration should be given to updating the NHL documentation to expand on the organization's national significance.

Cooper Union, New York, New York (NHL, 1978)
The nomination for Cooper Union stresses the biographical history of Peter Cooper and how he designed this institution. Cooper Union is also significant in the history of progressive education and is an important place in the intellectual history of American labor. As a democratic experiment in education, it fostered both intellectual development and activism among its students. For instance, Samuel Gompers, a founder of the American Federation of Labor, was one among many figures in labor history who studied here.

Greendale Historic District, Greendale, Wisconsin (NHL, 2012)
As one of three greenbelt towns constructed by the Resettlement Administration Division of Suburban Resettlement, the Village of Greendale exemplifies a key economic relief program of the New Deal. Intended for lower-income residents, the Greendale project provided work for

skilled and unskilled workers in the construction industry and homes for working-class families. The Greenbelt Historic District, Maryland (NHL, 1997) and the Greenhills Historic District, Greenhills, Ohio (NHL, 2016) are other designated greenbelt communities that could be updated to reflect their significance for illustrating governmental response to the needs of working-class families during the Depression. These NHLs are also significant for association with the development of mid-twentieth century housing and community projects for economically marginalized Americans.

Hoover Dam, Boulder City, Nevada (NHL, 1985)
While this property is accurately recognized for being a marvel of engineering and for its significant role in opening the West to urban development, the Hoover Dam was also a massive labor project that was the site of worker protests and workers deaths. The introduction to this nomination states, "In 1931, construction workers quit in protest against dangerous working conditions and a killing pace, only to be replaced by the unemployed from Las Vegas. Not until passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933 did union organizers establish locals to shape conditions and labor terms for the project's completion." As such, this property is nationally significant for the part it played in the struggles over unionization during the New Deal era.



Hoover (Boulder) Dam construction, 1934 *(Ben D. Glaba, LOC P&P); Hoover Dam, 2018 (LOC P&P, CMH)*

Kennywood Park, West Mifflin, Pennsylvania (NHL, 1987)
Constructed as a trolley-excursion park in 1898 by the Monongahela Street Railway Company, Kennywood Park is an excellent example of "trolley parks" or amusement parks in suburban areas that were connected to urban centers via trolleys. This nomination could be updated to determine whether the property operated as a place of working-class leisure, a place like Playland Amusement Park (see below), during the twentieth century.

Playland Amusement Park, Rye, New York (NHL, 1987)
Places of working-class leisure constitute an important category among the types of sites recommended for NHL designation in this study. Playland Amusement Park is one of these properties. Opened in 1928, Playland was originally designed to cater to a middle-class clientele, but it also became a place that was accessible to and affordable for working-class families in the greater New York metropolitan to visit. The current nomination details the park's design.

Revisions could highlight the significance of this place for working-class leisure and culture of the mid-twentieth century.

Revere Beach Reservation, Revere, Massachusetts (NHL, 2003)
When the Metropolitan Park Commission initiated construction on the Revere Beach Reservation in 1896, it was one of the Commission's first planned ocean beaches designed for public recreational use. Although the beach was open for public consumption in general, it was especially directed to serve the working-class residents of the nearby city of Revere. The nomination details the significance of the design and construction of this cultural landscape, but it does not detail how the general public used it during its heyday in the first half of the twentieth century. Updates to the nomination could emphasize the importance of the reservation as a place of working-class leisure.

National Historic Landmarks Study List

This section provides a list of properties that appear to have strong associations with nationally significant events related to labor history in the United States. These properties are recommended as possible candidates for NHL designation. However, further study is needed before an evaluation can be completed. As noted in the registration guidelines, all evaluations must develop a full context associated with their respective significance, assess high integrity, and compare the subject property with others that share the same significance. Further study may reveal that a property did not have, or has since lost, the high integrity required for landmark consideration or that the property's historical significance is not at the national level.

This study list is not an exhaustive list for labor-related properties, but it does highlight sites mentioned in the text of each chapter, as well as listing prominent sites of labor history even if they are not referenced in the essays of this study. Arranged by the industry types discussed in each chapter, these properties may be found to exemplify particular labor processes, illustrate key events in labor history, or relate to important figures in the labor movement. Potential NHL criterion, themes, and cultural affiliations are also provided for each entry.

Manufacture

Aliquippa Historic District, Aliquippa, Pennsylvania
Criterion: 5
Theme: Organizing and Struggling
Cultural Affiliation: Varied
This district encompasses the Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation. In 1937, charges that the managers at Jones and Laughlin discriminated against union workers, along with the company's refusal to comply with a ruling by the National Labor Relations Board that favored the workers, led to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1937 milestone *National Labor Relations Board v. Jones & Laughlin Steel Corp*. In a 5-4 ruling, the Court sustained the constitutionality of the 1935 National Labor Relations Act (NLRA, also known as the Wagner Act). This act gave workers the right to collective bargaining and prohibited unfair labor practices by business enterprises. The *Jones* case is one of five that the Court decided on the same day regarding the constitutionality of the NLRA, and NHL evaluation will require a comparison of these cases and properties related to them.

Bethlehem Steel Plant, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
Criterion: 1
Theme: Working and Moving
Cultural Affiliation: Varied
In 1904, the Bethlehem Steel Corporation was established; twelve years later, in 1916, it had become the second largest steel manufacturing plant in the United States, after US Steel. The steel produced by Bethlehem Steel contributed significantly to the war effort during World War I and World War II, in addition to facilitating the construction of massive projects such as the Golden Gate Bridge. Furthermore, American industrialist engineer Frederick Winslow Taylor conducted time management studies at Bethlehem Steel between 1898 and 1901. His studies became the basis for "Taylorism," or scientific management—a system that diminished labor relations because of its assault on craft skills and workers' autonomy via managerial control. This property has been repurposed for recreation, so its integrity may have been compromised.

Bread and Roses Historic District, Lawrence, Massachusetts
Criterion: 1
Theme: Organizing and Struggling
Cultural Affiliation: Southern and Eastern European Immigrants, Women
This district is associated with the Lawrence Strike of 1912, commonly known as the Bread and Roses Textile Strike, organized against a reduction in millworkers' wages implemented after Massachusetts reduced working hours for children under eighteen from fifty-six to fifty-four hours. The strike was groundbreaking as a women-led, multinational, interracial strike that dispelled the American Federation of Labor (AFL) belief that such a population could not be organized. The use of police force on women and their children being sent to other cities for care garnered national attention. The strike was also reportedly important in creating strike strategies, such as the "moving picket line" (circling the entire mill district 24 hours a day), later used in other strikes.

Charleston Cigar Factory, Charleston, South Carolina [NHL Nomination under preparation]
Criterion: 1
Theme: Organizing and Struggling
Cultural Affiliation: African American
In 1903, the American Tobacco Company (ATC) began operating out of a former textile mill in downtown Charleston. The ATC cigar factory provided employment for almost 1,400 workers during the period from 1920 to 1930; sixty percent of those workers were women. Riding the wave of unionization after the formation of the CIO, the cigar workers in Charleston voted to join the CIO-affiliated United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America in 1943. When the ATC refused to pay the back wages withheld during the war and did not address workers' demands for a higher minimum wage and improved working conditions, the workers went on strike during the fall of 1945. Many of these workers were African American women, and the effort prompted ATC tobacco workers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania to walk off the job in sympathy. During this strike, Lucille Simmons, a longtime cigar worker and strike member notably changed the lyrics of the spiritual song "I Will Overcome" to "We Will Overcome" to sustain morale. A year after the strike ended, Anna Lee Bonneau and Evelyn Risher taught Zilphia Horton, the music director at Highlander Folk School, Simmons' version

of the song. Horton then taught to Pete Seeger, who changed the "will" to "shall," and helped turn this song into a national civil rights anthem.

Hopedale, Massachusetts
Criterion: 1
Theme: Working and Moving
Cultural Affiliation: Varied
Hopedale was originally a Christian socialist utopian community established in the 1840s. It became a town associated with the textile industry by the end of the century, and was the home of the Draper Corporation, which manufactured automatic looms for textile production. These looms helped precipitate the rise of the textile industry in the southeastern United States. Hopedale is currently a component of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, which explores early American industrial history. The area of Hopedale in the National Heritage Corridor includes examples of workers' housing along with worksites.

Women's Trade Union League Office, Boston, Massachusetts
Criterion: 1
Theme: Organizing and Struggling
Cultural Affiliation: Women
In existence from 1903-1950, the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) was the first national association dedicated to organizing women workers. First formed in Boston during an AFL meeting at Faneuil Hall, the WTUL had soon established branches in Boston, Chicago, and New York City. The league helped women start unions in many industries and cities and also provided relief, publicity, and general assistance for striking women's unions. Among its most significant victories, the league helped to establish new safety regulations following the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Company factory fire in New York City, and between 1913 and 1923 gained the minimum wage for women in fourteen states. The League's Boston office on Boylston Place, in which the League maintained offices and a soup kitchen during the Depression, still exists on the edge of Boston Common and was incorporated into two historical walking tours of downtown Boston: the Women's Heritage Trail and the Working People's Heritage Trail.

Extractive

Hawk's Nest Tunnel, Gauley Bridge, West Virginia
Criterion: 1
Theme: Living and Dying
Cultural Affiliation: Varied
Union Carbide's Hawk's Nest Tunnel (1930-31) is the location of the worst occupational health and safety disaster in U.S. history, where an estimated 700 employees died due to dust exposure (silicosis). Following Congressional hearings in 1936, Secretary of Labor Francis Perkins called the First National Silicosis Conference. While no national legislation came forth due to deadlocks, forty-six states enacted laws covering workers afflicted with silicosis. The tunnel may be significant for symbolizing the power that companies held over non-union minority work forces, and the event may be significant as a precursor to air quality standards (Threshold Limit Values) used by OSHA to protect workers' health.

Union Miners Cemetery, Mount Olive, Illinois (NR, 1972)
Criteria: 1, 2
Theme: Living and Dying
Cultural Affiliation: Varied, German-American
This property is the only union-owned cemetery in the nation. Purchased to bury four miners killed in an 1898 battle with company guards in Virden, Illinois, the cemetery became a popular site for workers' commemorations of the uprising. The cemetery also contains the burial site of mining activist Mother Jones, who died in 1930 requesting burial with "her boys," and a 1936 memorial in her honor. This property would need to meet NHL Exceptions 5 and 7 for designating cemeteries and commemorative sites.

Miners' Hospital, Park City, Utah
Criterion: 1
Theme: Living and Dying
Cultural Affiliation: Varied
This restored structure, which currently operates as a community center, began as a hospital. The Western Federation Local 144 founded the hospital in 1904 to aid miners in the local silver-mining camp, despite the mine owners' strong opposition. This property is an example of the wider effort to establish hospitals for workers that unions like the Western Federation of Miners and the United Mine Workers launched beginning in 1891.

Warren Baseball Field, Arizona
Criterion: 1
Theme: Organizing and Struggling
Cultural Affiliation: Latino
In the summer of 1917, one of the most notorious violations of workers' civil liberties occurred during a copper miners' strike near the town of Bisbee, Arizona. In response to the strike, which was affiliated with the IWW, the local sheriff amassed a "sheriff's posse" to round up any man presumed to have worked in the mines. Those who refused to break the strike were sent to Warren ballfield to wait until they were loaded onto cattle cars and "deported" to New Mexico. Members of the posse then occupied all routes back to town to prevent the men from returning. The utter violation of civil liberties sparked a presidential committee to investigate the events of the "Bisbee Deportation."

Transportation

Paseo Baptist Church, Kansas City, Missouri
Criteria: 1, 2
Theme: Organizing and Struggling
Cultural Affiliation: African American
Location of the convention of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) in 1937, the year in which A. Philip Randolph's union negotiated the first major labor agreement between a United States corporation (Pullman) and an African American-led union. The event was one of the most important markers of African American independence from racist paternalism after Reconstruction, in addition to becoming a model for other Black workers. Other potential properties for comparison include three Chicago locations associated with the BSCP's most aggressive and solvent division in the 1920s: an office and meeting space at the Metropolitan

Community Center (4100 South Parkway), and two union headquarter locations at 224 East Pershing Road (1927) and 3118 Giles Avenue (1928).

Schubert Theater, Minneapolis, Minnesota (NR, 1996)
Criterion: 1
Theme: Organizing and Struggling
Exception: 2
Cultural Affiliation: Varied
In 1934, members of the Minneapolis Teamsters Local 574 launched a wildcat strike that turned into an effort to organize the city's entire trucking industry. On April 15, organizers held a mass meeting at the Schubert Theater in which they registered 3,000 new members. The ensuing strike incorporated workers from various industries and the Farmers' Holiday Association. Future Teamsters' leaders, including James Hoffa, studied and copied the 574 leaders' organizing tactics, such that this strike shaped the development of the Teamsters for decades afterward. In 1999, the Schubert Theater was relocated to prevent it from being demolished and would require consideration under NHL Exception 2 for moved properties. The structure is currently part of the Hennepin Center for the Arts.

Agriculture

Central Aguirre Sugar Mill and Town, Salinas, Puerto Rico (NR, 2002)
Criteria: 1, 6
Theme: Working and Moving
Cultural Affiliation: Latino
The sugar mill at Aguirre was established in 1899, just after the Spanish American War, by a group of four men from Boston. The investors had taken over a formerly Spanish-owned sugar hacienda and promptly began to modernize the operations. Currently the mill and town are part of a National Register Historic District recognized as the only surviving example in Puerto Rico of a self-sustaining company town that encompassed worksites as well as domestic and community properties of the sugar workers. The planned community illustrates how industrial urban design of the early twentieth century was implemented in Puerto Rico and adapted to suit the cultural preferences of the Puerto Rican workforce.

Ralph H. Durst House, Wheatland, California
Criterion: 1
Theme: Organizing and Struggling
Cultural Affiliation: Asian, European Immigrants, Political Radicals
The Ralph H. Durst Hop Ranch was the location of the 1913 Wheatland Hops Riot. Supported by the IWW, the uprising was the result of organizing migrant farm workers who protested the deplorable conditions of a tent colony, which Durst had established on his property to house some of the 2,800 migrant workers during the hops harvest season. An investigation into the circumstances that caused the uprising led to the first reform efforts of migrant labor conditions in California. The house is currently being restored, and the property on which it sits remains relatively unchanged, although it now produces walnuts rather than hops. Two extant hop kilns from the early twentieth century also remain on the property.

Kregel Windmill Company, Nebraska City, Nebraska [NHL nomination under preparation]
Criterion 1
Theme: Working and Moving
Cultural Affiliation: Varied
This property is an example of a popular industry in the Great Plains during the early twentieth century: windmill manufacturing. Rather than being a significant industry in and of itself, windmill manufacturing was critical for agricultural production in the Great Plains. According to the National Register nomination for the property, the subterranean water that windmills were able to access made agriculture possible, especially during times of drought. As possibly the only intact and extant example of a windmill company of its size, the property has a strong ability to illustrate the significance of windmills for advancing agricultural production in Nebraska and other plains states.

Mitchell-East Building, Tyronza, Arkansas (NR, 2010)
Criterion: 1
Theme: Organizing and Struggling
Cultural Affiliation: African American and White Tenant Farmers
As the former dry-cleaning store of H. L. Mitchell and the service station of Clay East, two founders of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU), this property served as the union's original headquarters. The STFU formed in 1934 as an interracial union designed to aid sharecroppers and tenant farmers who were facing eviction as a result of Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) policies. They also sought to ensure that sharecroppers received federal aid from the AAA. During the 1930s, it became the most successful union of its kind. Currently, the building is the home of the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum and is a contributing property in the National Register-listed Tyronza Commercial Historic District.

The Wheel Store, Batesville, Arkansas (NR, 1988)
Criterion: 1
Theme: Organizing and Struggling
Cultural Affiliation: Varied
This simple building was the location of an Agricultural Wheel Cooperative store. The Agricultural Wheel began after the Civil War as an agrarian reform movement designed to aid independent farmers, tenant farmers, and sharecroppers during the agricultural recession of the 1870s. Formed in Arkansas, the Agricultural Wheel was one of many agrarian reform groups that would eventually influence the rise of the populist People's Party of the 1890s. This particular property is listed in the National Register as regionally significant, but it may also be nationally significant if it is the only example of an extant location of the Agricultural Wheel organization.

Service

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Headquarters (239 W 136 Street), New York City, New York
Criteria: 1, 2
Theme: Organizing and Struggling
Cultural Affiliation: African American

As the original headquarters of the BSCP, this site was home to the most significant national union of Black workers in the United States. Beginning in 1925, the union was led by the pioneering civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph for over four decades. Randolph and the BSCP would play critical roles in both the labor and the civil rights movements, notably by securing a contract with the Pullman company in 1937 and for planning the March on Washington Movement of 1941. Other potential properties for comparison include three in Chicago that are associated with the BSCP's most aggressive and solvent division during the 1920s: an office and meeting space at the Metropolitan Community Center (4100 South Parkway) and two union headquarters: 224 East Pershing Road (1927) and 3118 Giles Avenue (1928).

Clayborn Temple, Memphis, Tennessee
Criteria 1
Theme: Organizing and Struggling
Cultural Affiliation: African American
Originally constructed in 1891 as a Second Presbyterian church, Clayborn Temple became an African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1945. Like other Black churches, this property served an important role in fostering civil rights activism, and it was a particularly important gathering place during the Memphis Sanitation Strike. Throughout the strike, Clayborn Temple served as a center for organizing activity and as a refuge during the uprising of March 28th.

Curtis Publishing Company Headquarters, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Criterion: 1
Theme: Organizing and Struggling
Cultural Affiliation: Varied
Founded in 1891, the Curtis Publishing Company constructed this building as its headquarters in 1910. While Curtis Publishing was best known as the publisher of the *Saturday Evening Post*, the Curtis building is significant in labor history as the location for early experiments in scientific office management. In 1907, William Henry Leffingwell began implementing the Taylor system at this location and published his results in what became the first in a series of office manuals, entitled "Scientific Management in the Office."

National Register of Historic Places Study List

Many properties related to American labor history are locally or regionally significant, and thus are potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. However, many lack the national significance required to be designated as NHLs. This section provides a list of such properties identified through the course of this study. Culled from the chapters of this study, this list is intended to illustrate types of properties that are not considered candidates for NHL designation, but could be eligible for listing in the National Register and are not yet listed. The list is not intended to be comprehensive and represents only a sampling of such properties that might exist. As with the preceding NHL study list, further study is likely needed before an evaluation of National Register eligibility can be determined for these properties.

Manufacture

Cannery Workers' and Farm Laborers' Union Local 18257, Seattle, Washington
Cultural Affiliation: Asian-American, Pacific Islander

This building was the location of the first Filipino-led union. It was established by migrant laborers known as "Alaskeros," because they worked in Alaskan salmon canneries during the summer and then moved south to work in the farms and orchards of Washington, Oregon, and California for the rest of the year. Seeking to improve the lives of these workers, the Cannery Workers' and Farm Laborers' Union Local 18257 was the first of its kind to receive an AFL charter, on June 19, 1933, with Virgil Duyungan serving as the initial president.

Charleston Bagging and Manufacturing Company, Charleston, South Carolina
Cultural Affiliation: African American, women
On August 2, 1933, an estimated 800 workers at this bagging plant staged a wildcat strike demanding higher wages. Workers in the weaving room, most of whom were African American women, initiated the strike after learning the nearby American Tobacco Plant had announced that it would pay employees a minimum wage of $12.00 a week, to be in compliance with the blanket codes of the recently passed National Industrial Recovery Act. The striking workers demanded the same minimum wage. The strike shut down the plant for almost two weeks. Believing that new employees were to blame for the strike, management only reinstated the jobs of those workers who had been employed for a significant amount of time when operations resumed on September 5th.

Daniel Pratt Cotton Gin Factory, Prattville, Alabama
Cultural affiliation: Unknown
Daniel Pratt constructed this factory complex in 1848 to manufacture cotton gins, spin cotton, and produce-related machinery for the textile industry. The 40-acre property consists of five brick resources, a mill, and a pond. Currently slated for rehabilitation, much of the historical property retains structural integrity. It is a significant location in the early development of the southern textile industry.

O'Connor's Bar and Check Cashing, Baltimore, Maryland
Cultural Affiliation: European Immigrant (Finnish)
During the early 1930s, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee rented the second floor of this bar for their headquarters. Because of extreme hostility toward unionization, labor organizers were prohibited from operating within the borders of the Sparrow's Point mills and company town. Therefore, this location became the center of local steel workers' organizing efforts prior to the formation of the United Steel Workers of America in 1943.

Extractive

Docena Company Town, Docena, Alabama
Cultural Affiliation: African American
Owned and operated by the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company, Docena began as a company town in the larger Birmingham mining district during the early twentieth century. The construction of the town illustrates how racial prejudice was inscribed in the design of company-owned communities. The extant houses also illustrate regional working-class company housing constructed during the 1910s.

Red Mountain Park, Birmingham, Alabama
Cultural Affiliation: Varied, African American

Currently the home of one of the largest urban parks in the country, Red Mountain Park was established on property that formerly operated as an iron ore mine. The first commercial iron ore mine in the area opened in 1863; the last one closed in 1962. The property holds the potential for archeological significance, and extant early twentieth century housing beyond the park boundaries has the potential to provide insight into working class domestic and community life.

Pratt Consolidated Coal's Banner Mine, Littleton, Alabama
Cultural Affiliation: African American
In 1911, an explosion in this mine killed 132 workers. While mine explosions were common, large-scale incidents such as this event generated greater public awareness of the unsafe conditions of underground mines. Of those who died in the explosion, 128 were convict miners, which precipitated the decline and eventual end to the practice of convict mining in the region.

Work People's College, Duluth, Minnesota
Cultural Affiliation: Political Radicals, Finnish
One resource remains from this school, initially started by Finnish immigrants belonging to the Finnish Socialist Federation in 1907. As explained in the Extractive Chapter, this was part of a larger effort among mining unions to create educational opportunities for workers. The more politically radical Finnish miners in Duluth used this college to teach methods of industrial unionism.

Service

G. Fox and Company, Hartford, Connecticut
Cultural Affiliation: Women
Founded in 1848, G. Fox would become one of the largest department store retailers in the county. The current building was constructed in 1918 and became the largest building in the city of Hartford. This property was one of many regionally significant department store chains of the twentieth century.

Rich's Department Store, Atlanta, Georgia
Cultural Affiliation: Women
Currently part of the Sam Nunn Federal Building, this was the final location of Rich's, a department store chain that began as a dry goods store in 1867. This property, the largest of the stores associated with the chain, was constructed in 1924 and became the flagship location. Like the G. Fox building, this resource is significant in the regional history of urban department stores.

Transportation

General Longshore Workers Local 1419, New Orleans, Louisiana
Cultural Affiliation: African American
According to the Transportation chapter of this study, longshore unions were a major form of organizing activity among African American workers in the South. This particular property was an "imposing and stately labor temple" that symbolized the significant role that African Americans played in longshoremen unions.

Agriculture

History House Museum, Tillery, North Carolina
Cultural Affiliation: African American
Currently operating as a historic house museum, this home formerly belonged to a family in the Tillery Resettlement Farm. During the New Deal, the Resettlement Administration established communities for farming families to help them through the agricultural crisis of the Depression. Tillery Farm was part of a larger community called Roanoke Farms that was segregated by race: Halifax Farms for White farming families and Tillery for African American farming families.

Milam Park/La Plaza Zacate, San Antonio, Texas
Cultural Affiliation: Latino
Municipal spaces played an important role in labor organization and labor recruitment. Milam Park served as a site in which displaced as well as seasonal workers met with labor recruiters in the effort to secure jobs, particularly in the sugar beet fields of the north. Labor recruiters would hire whole families and provide them with transportation to the northern states. Labor radicals also congregated in this space in the effort to recruit and organize the masses of workers. This site is also important for the Pecan Shellers Strike of 1938 and its association with labor and civil rights activist Emma Tenayuca.

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Strike Sympathizers, New York, NY, between c. 1915-c. 1920 *(LOC P&P, Bain)*

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